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The priesthood of all believers...p. 16

Questions we never ask God...p. 12



59th year of publication

Chinese house church leaders divided over registration

Xu Mei

BEIJING (Compass) — On March 1, China adopted new Regulations on Religious Affairs first announced by the government in December 2004. The government claims the new regulations are a step towards religious freedom. However, some Christian leaders have expressed serious concerns, particularly with the issue of church registration.

Last year, the government

carried out a survey of unregistered house churches using members of the Protestant Three Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM) churches who had contact with unregistered Christians. Results showed there were several thousand unregistered meeting points in Beijing, with over 100,000 members — far outnumbering the 30,000 Protestants registered with the TSPM.

In the run-up to the Beijing

Olympics in 2008, it is clearly in the government's interests to stabilize the situation by encouraging these house churches to register.

However, registration has long been a source of tension and debate in China. Unregistered churches oppose registration mainly on two grounds. First, they believe Christ rather than any political body is the head of the Christian church.

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Nigeria still needs help strengthening Christian education



Adrian
Helleman
with class

that is no longer the
case. What has hap-
pened?

During the seventies the Nigerian government wanted to universalize education, making it mandatory for all children to receive basic education. At that time most established schools were in the South. Missionaries had been restricted to the North, which was Muslim territory. Islamic education for generations focused almost exclusively on the Qur'an. While some Muslims opposed

the introduction of Universal Basic Education (UBE), perceiving it as a threat to their way of life, others pressed for public schools in the North, so that Muslim children could also learn what they needed to function in modern Nigeria.

Muslims were also in the forefront in urging the government to nationalize church and mission schools, particularly to counteract the rise of Christianity through such schools. The government acceded to this request. The result was UBE. Before this only a select few children had access to mission schools and enjoyed any education.

Adrian and Wendy Helleman

JOS, Nigeria — Why do we continue to work in Nigeria today, in the 21st century? Sometimes the question is asked: Haven't missionaries been working here effectively for quite a long time? Hasn't the time come to hand over the work of missions to indigenous congregations?

There is some truth in these questions. The phenomenal growth of the church in Nigeria today is largely due to local churches building on the foundations that were laid as much as a century ago. But there are some critical gaps in

those foundations. One of the most serious is that of the educational structures which serve Nigerians.

Under the British colonial administration, missionaries were in the forefront of introducing literacy and establishing schools. There was a time when Nigerians could receive a good education here in Nigeria, especially at mission schools. In fact, those who are now leaders in their communities and in government are typically graduates of such schools. Even some twenty years ago graduates of Nigerian universities were readily accepted for graduate work overseas. But

Now all children could attend.

What the government overlooked was the provision of teachers, classrooms and educational tools. In practice, teachers with little or no training were placed before large classes, with as many as sixty students, using makeshift conditions, and with hardly any books to share. UBE was a good idea, but it was poorly implemented, and supported with only minimal financial resources.

Decades later the government can no longer afford to maintain these schools. At present the government is handing them back to the churches but the damage has been done. UBE in effect introduced a rather poor universal education. Today large classes are the norm at every level. It is not so bad if classrooms have mud walls but students get hardly any attention. There are just too many of them, and books are scarce.

Teachers receive barely adequate training, and there are not enough colleges of education. English is the language of instruction, but many graduates are woefully inadequate in its use. Students can graduate from secondary school, hardly able to do more than write their own names. University

graduates have difficulty writing papers that would be a snap for most North American high school students.

At higher levels students are typically ill-prepared for graduate work and receive minimal supervision, with the result that they will find it difficult to supervise properly the next generation. The educational policy of the Nigerian system is sometimes jokingly described as: "Let my people go." In other words, students are promoted

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Wendy Helleman teaching



News

Nigeria *continued from p. 1*



ed, whether or not they are ready, whether or not they have learned anything.

Nigerian students face challenges that are unknown in North America. To start with, most of our students live in hostels where they are packed like sardines. Peace and quiet are unknown. And socializing is very important; people constantly come by without invitation. We marvel that our students get any work done at all.

African culture is predominantly an oral culture, and our students do much better when asked to make a class presentation than to write a paper. They find it difficult to express themselves in writing. Nigeria boasts excellent writers like Chinua Achebe, but our students do not read enough good literature to get a sense for style. Newspapers here use an affected and stilted style that is unsuitable for academic writing. Even so, we find that many are quickly satisfied with their work: "This is good enough, isn't it?" They do not understand higher standards until they have worked with us for awhile.

Nigeria is a country with vitality, not just a vitality of trading and getting ahead. Nigerians love to travel; they want to go places. We believe there is a genuine optimism among Nigerians that things don't have to be the way they are. They know that education is crucial to the health of the nation, an important factor in the transition to a better future.

But that transition will not happen by itself. Unless there is proper promotion of education, with funds to match, Nigeria remains stymied in its growth, economically and otherwise. The federal budget, however, continues to cut back its support for education at every level; the percentage of the budget for education has been declining for years.

This is an issue raised by the union representing lecturers at federal universities (ASUU). It

recently held a three-day strike, but achieved little more than the much longer strikes of previous years which have seriously disrupted the education of many university students. In the struggle of will between the union and the government, students are caught in the middle. They are the chief victims. But ultimately the whole country suffers from neglect of education.

Our students come from all over Nigeria, yet even today, after decades of UBE, it is readily apparent which students are from the South, since they are generally better prepared. Christians from the South typically have a better (i.e. Western) education and are able to take the better jobs in both business and government. Many Muslims feel resentment towards Christians, who are working at jobs they think properly belong to themselves. We are convinced that raising the quality of education can also help to resolve some of the ethnic and religious conflicts plaguing Nigeria, since Muslims generally receive even less education than the general population.

In the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Jos (Unijos), where we teach, both Christian and Muslim students can receive a basic degree at the bachelor's level, as well as earn a master's and doctoral degree. In the North, where Islam is dominant, Christianity is rarely taught in universities. In the South, where Christianity predominates, most schools emphasize Christianity, with some attention for African traditional religions; very little Islam is taught. In the Middle Belt, where both religions are present in significant numbers, both are emphasized. Thus, at Unijos, students in Religious Studies can graduate with either an Islamic or Christian emphasis. All students are required to take some courses in the other religion. There is even a diploma

program for Christian pastors and church leaders so that they can learn the basics of theology and give better leadership.

Pastoral training is generally done in Bible colleges and seminaries, and these are found throughout Nigeria. Every denomination has its own schools or works cooperatively with other denominations. In Jos there are at least three major seminaries, as well as innumerable smaller ones. A number of seminaries offer a masters degree.

The quality of education at these schools ranges from good to inadequate. Faculty members are typically overworked and not well qualified academically for their work. But students can get a good education because the atmosphere is conducive to serious work; seminaries have avoided the pattern of strikes affecting the public system. Some seminaries wish to offer a doctorate, but they lack the necessary staff and adequate library resources. In fact, even university libraries are inadequate when it comes to graduate-level research.

But Unijos and other Nigerian institutions serve these schools for the highest degree, the doctorate. The only alternative for capable students is to go overseas, which is not only extremely expensive but also disruptive of family life, not to mention other hidden costs, such as the culturally inappropriate nature of such an education.

We came to the University of Jos about three years ago, to help in the education of graduate students in Religious Studies. At that time there was a real opening because the university had agreed to admit seminary graduates to its programs; formerly only students with degrees from public institutions were admitted. The department already enjoys the affiliation of many church-related schools, and attracts students from

all areas of Nigeria. Jos has long functioned as a center for Christian and mission organizations in Nigeria. While the faculty includes Muslims, the Christian faculty is almost without exception evangelical in orientation. Our role is to help strengthen the department in subjects taught and in the necessary library and internet resources. While we teach some undergraduate courses, our main focus is on graduate studies, working at what is called the 'post-graduate' level, giving master's courses and guiding students as they write theses and dissertations.

We are committed to this work because Nigerian churches are growing rapidly, and need qualified teachers for their Bible colleges, seminaries and theological faculties. At present only one seminary and most departments of religious studies in Nigerian universities (about 20) grant doctoral degrees.

Our vision is for growing cooperation between the universities and existing schools, like the Theological College of Northern Nigeria, so that by working together they can provide theology students access to a high-quality PhD degree right here in Nigeria. We wish to help strengthen the education of Christian leadership at all levels, particularly by assuring the possibility and quality of education needed at the highest levels, right here in Nigeria.

The Nigerian education system is presently in a state of crisis. So this is an important time for us to be teaching here. We can only work to the best of our abilities. If we change the attitudes of a few of our students, we will be happy. If we can challenge them to think in a Christian way about the problems facing their country, we will be overjoyed. And if some of them eventually become teachers, the effect of our work can multiply.

Education is an area where missionaries can continue to work constructively and productively long

after other aspects of missionary work should be handed over to the indigenous church. Such was our observation during the years that we spent teaching in Moscow. It is also our observation here in Nigeria. The era of overt missionary involvement is coming to an end. This is quite clear in cities like Lagos or Port Harcourt, in parts of Nigeria that have been over-exposed to expatriate involvement in the oil industry and other forms of business. In Plateau state, in the Middle Belt, where we work, the welcome has not worn as thin, though even here there are signs that overt mission involvement will not continue indefinitely. But in education for Christian leadership the need for support is by no means a thing of the past. This is the reason why we have come to Nigeria, and why we continue to give of ourselves here.

In this way we try to fulfill Jesus' commission to his followers: "All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." He also assures us: "And surely I am with you always to the very end of the age."

[Adrian and Wendy have been teaching in Nigeria at the University of Jos, under the auspices of Christian Studies International, the Canadian arm of the International Institute for Christian Studies, based in Kansas City, Kansas USA. They also work as 'partners' with Christian Reformed World Missions. Before serving in Nigeria they taught for almost seven years in Russia, in the Philosophy Faculty of Moscow State University.]

Politics

... China cont. from p. 1



Prayer circle in China

Second, registered churches are subject to much tighter control over administration, church activities, and the ordination and training of leaders.

Protestant house church members also object to the political theology of the government-controlled Three Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM), which oversees the activities of registered Protestant churches.

Finally, the suffering experienced by the church during the Cultural Revolution has left many Christians with a lingering distrust of the government.

The new regulations have already sparked vigorous debate among house church leaders.

In Beijing, some younger house church leaders have taken an optimistic view. They believe legal recognition will give the persecuted minority an opportunity to impact society. For example, they could establish government-approved kindergartens and health clinics.

The new regulations apparently allow churches to register directly with the government rather than with the TSPM. If Beijing Christians succeed in registering while maintaining their independence from the TSPM, other urban house churches may follow their example.

However, this could divide and weaken the house church movement. An older generation of house church leaders – who see the TSPM as a tool of the Communist Party to control and infiltrate churches – are less likely to register.

The son of one such leader, who is involved in outreach to intellectuals, told *Compass* he believes the new regulations will lead to tighter control. "The Party wants to crack down on house church training schools. This had already happened in Anhui even before the new regulations came into effect. And [these regulations] are not set in concrete. From the

Party's point of view, they can be still further refined and improved, leading to more control."

House church leaders a thousand miles south of Beijing

also expressed their concern. "We are worried about what may happen after March 1. We don't mind too much about registering with the government through the Public Security Bureau, but we do mind interference from the State Administration of Religious Affairs [SARA, formerly the Religious Affairs Bureau] and the TSPM.

"Things have been fairly open in our area for the last two years. We had visits by local officials after neighbors complained about loud music, but it turned out okay. Now we will just have to wait and see."

Legal experts have criticized the vague wording of the regulations. For example, Article 3 guarantees protection of "normal" religious activities. "Normal" is not defined, but from the context it seems to apply only to registered churches.

Article 14 says churches applying for registration must be "rationally distributed." At a conference in the U.S. in late February, Rev. Cao ShengJie of the China Christian Council explained that churches would not be allowed on every street corner, but would be "rationally" located to avoid duplication of facilities.

Article 14 also says a church applying for registration must have "religious personnel or other persons who are qualified under the prescription of the religion concerned." This creates difficulties for house churches, since members of unregistered churches do not qualify for admission to China's 18 government-approved religious seminaries.

A Hong Kong Chinese pastor who has worked with the church on the mainland for many years commented, "On the surface, the Party's new Religious Affairs regulations appear to be more relaxed than previously. Now religion will be managed from the top rather than by suppression and brute force as in the past."

However, "the Party still sees itself as in sole control of the

Whither Lebanon?

Last year Nancy and I were present for the baptism of a niece in a Maronite Catholic church near Chicago. The congregation was a small one, consisting primarily of Lebanese immigrants and their descendants. The liturgy was partly in English, but much was in ancient Aramaic, the language of Jesus himself and of the first of his followers some two millennia ago. Worshipping with this dwindling body gave us a vivid sense of being in the midst of a Christian community with very ancient roots indeed.

Its members' homeland of Lebanon is distinguished by numerous and conflicting religious loyalties. Nevertheless, the capital city of Beirut was for many decades an island of stability in an otherwise turbulent region. As a result of the National Pact of 1943, under whose terms Lebanon gained its independence from France, the country's political offices were parcelled out among its seemingly irreconcilable confessional communities. The president, most notably, would always be a Maronite Christian, while the prime minister was to be a Sunni Muslim. This power-sharing arrangement was based on a 1932 census which showed Christians to constitute a majority of the population, making Lebanon the only predominantly Christian country in that part of the world.

In the post-war decades, however, Lebanon's demographic character shifted decisively, with Muslims likely becoming a majority. Because the Christian population had a proportionately lower birthrate and were more likely to emigrate to the west, they had almost certainly become a minority in their own country. However, the government could not be persuaded to conduct a new census to confirm this, because it would have necessitated a modification of the fragile National Pact.

The inability of this unwritten agreement to accommodate demographic change eventually led to civil war in 1975. The unrest in Lebanon in turn led to Syrian and Israeli military occupations. While Israel pulled out five years ago, Syrian troops remain, ostensibly keeping a fragile peace, but perhaps, as many suspect, enforcing the Damascus government's longstanding claim

government and of ideology. The new religious policy is more concrete than before. It spells out clearly the punishments for those who break the new regulations.

"We will have to wait and see whether China really wants to liberalize its religious policies," he continued. "To some extent, the new President Hu Jintao is more conservative than Jiang Zemin, so religious policy may even have regressed.

"But as the number of religious believers continues to multiply, the Party will have to make greater concessions on religion in the future."

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Principalities & Powers
David T. Koyzis

over Lebanon itself.

It is somewhat ironic that the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik al-Hariri two months ago has been the catalyst for world pressure on Syria to vacate its much smaller neighbor. Writing in 1997, Habib C. Malik viewed Hariri, despite his moderate reputation, as a force for the continuing islamization of Lebanon at the expense of its Christian population, primarily by appointing Sunni Muslims to top bureaucratic posts, thereby upsetting the careful balance among the religious communities in the allocation of administrative positions.

If Syria really is on the way out, what will become of Lebanon? Given that Lebanon's very existence, as well as its once vibrant civil society, came about largely because of its erstwhile Christian majority, its future as an independent state is far from certain. Those with Islamist sentiments in particular have been less solicitous of maintaining the country's separate status. After all, a combined Syrian-Lebanese state would solidify a Muslim majority and further isolate the diminishing Christian minority, a potentially disastrous outcome, not only for that community, but for Christians elsewhere in the region.

All the same, there is reason for hope. Although a withdrawal of Syrian troops could see Lebanon plunge again into civil conflict, there is a more promising possibility: popular outrage over Hariri's assassination, coupled with the weakness of the current Syrian leadership, could serve to unify Lebanon's diverse peoples around the shared project of reviving the country's status as one of the more prosperous and democratic states in the Middle East.

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Editorial

“Shall We Dance?”

Tony Meyer

As my family and I drove through New England this past summer, the need for today's Christian churches to learn how to change was tragically brought to mind. Virtually each town had an old church steeple towering above its houses. But at the bottom of the steeple we too often found an old church building that is now a museum or a store or an office. The vibrant Christianity that at one time was housed in that building faded away over time and the only evidence left was the steeple.

Even the most resistant of us are being forced to realize that in our churches change isn't optional – it is a given! A change process that honors the past and engages the present while embracing the future is a reality that we all need to learn how to handle. The evidence for the necessity of change is starkly displayed in the steeples above museums and stain glassed windowed country stores.

How to handle that process, however, is the challenge that each of our church communities must face. The pace and process of change can take a myriad of different forms with results that range from magnificent to disastrous. Some communities have attempted to face radical change quickly in order to get the pain over with. Results have varied from exciting revitalization of ministry to swift and painful devastation. On the other hand, some attempts to change slowly and patiently have brought healing in divided communities while others have slowly sapped the life out of a church like a slow bleed. Each community must face the question not will we change, but how are we going to handle the change process?

Churches and pastors together must meet on the dance floor of change and be completely honest with each other there. The change process, big or small, in any church is a dance between the congregation and the pastor. And it is here that they will move forward beautifully or, too often, stumble

awkwardly. If pastors and churches have learned to dance well together through the change process, the change, although challenging, can bring joy and even pleasure not just at the end of the dance, but all through it as well.

“Pick your Partner”

Churches and pastors must pick their dancing partners well at the very start. Already in the call process, honest discussions on the topic of change are vital. Too often the pastor is trying to land the job and the church is trying to land the pastor so challenging discussions on volatile topics such as change are avoided. But honest communication on key questions at this very early stage in the dance will avoid great pain in the future.

Churches must honestly evaluate their own dance style and share that with their prospective pastors. It is fine to talk about future vision, but also talk about how you want to get there. Is change a monster or a friend in this community? Are they ready for a little tweak or a major overhaul? How fast do they want to change? How has change been received in the past – with eagerness or reluctance? What kind of dance partner are they looking for – someone to take the lead or someone to simply support in the process? Too often churches get the wrong partner because they aren't honest at the start. They do their best to portray what they think the pastor would want them to be instead of who they really are.

And too often pastors get the wrong partner because they aren't honest at the start either. Pastors must know their own change style and be honest with their prospective partners. Tell them what kind of leader you are. Let them know if you enter change eagerly or reluctantly. Tell them if you like to move slow or fast when it comes to change. Pastors may share the vision of the church but too often impose their own style and schedule of change on a church without considering the willingness of their potential partner.

If we are going to have churches and pastors that are able to succeed in this rapidly changing culture, then at the very start we need to make sure that we are choosing the right dance partner.

The dance

But simply choosing the right dancing partner doesn't ensure smooth sailing. Even after choosing the right partner there is the process of learning to dance together. The early years of ministry together can be the most challenging as both the pastor and the church take the dance floor. The dance starts a little bit awkwardly. We don't get too close to each other. We clumsily hand the lead back and forth. And we often step on each other's toes, sometimes causing real pain.

The early years of ministry together demand grace for each other. As we feel the awkwardness of the change process and the hurt inflicted on each other in our missteps, the temptation is to leave the dance floor all together and to simply give up. Many pastors and churches do. Sometimes they agree simply not to face the reality of change. And



sometime they decide that they simply can't dance together and part ways in their in life-long search for the perfect pastor or the perfect church.

The pastor-church relationships that lead to vibrant ministries are the ones that are willing to work through the challenges of change and learn to dance together. They get to know each other and appreciate each other for the specific gifts they possess. They learn when to dance fast and when to dance slowly. They learn what moves cause them to stumble and what moves cause them to shine. And they learn, maybe most importantly, to apologize, forgive each other and then try again.

Two Steps to Learn

There are two steps to the dance of change that both pastors and churches need to learn if they are going to survive the dance together. Healthy change begins off the dance floor with communication. Make the time to talk with each other and get to know each other. Find out what style of change suits your pastor best. Find out what kind of change the church is willing to try and which voices are important to hear. Until these kinds of honest conversations happen, pastors and churches are going to continue to step onto the dance floor together and suddenly find out that they aren't dancing the same dance with disastrous results!

Secondly, surviving change, and thriving through it, demands trust. Good dancers sometimes take the lead and other times move at the impulse of their partner. And that takes trust. Until churches believe that pastors really do love them and want what is best for them and until pastors believe that their parishioners love the church and want what is best for the kingdom of God they will dance with hesitation and fear.

Learning to dance well together through change takes time and grace. The question isn't whether we will have to step onto the dance floor of change or not. The question is will we dance well or will we dance poorly?

Some churches send their pastor to dance alone while they sit on the sidelines and watch. It won't take long before that pastor moves on exhausted and frustrated. Some churches are ready to dance but their pastors, afraid to risk their own safety and security, afraid to possibly fail, prevent them from stepping onto the dance floor and their dreams soon die. Some pastors and churches are sitting on the dance floor together. They've tried to dance and failed, and rather than try again they've given up.

But others are dancing. Some are dancing fast and some slowly. Some of their dances are still awkward and halting and some are moving with grace and power. But they are dancing together. They are facing the reality of change and learning how to handle it together. They are honoring the past and engaging the present while embracing the future. When a church and a pastor make those moves together on the dance floor of change, our Audience of One, God himself, applauds. He applauds his Church that has learned to dance together beautifully!

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Letters

It wasn't about homophobia

Tony Campolo

It really wasn't primarily about the gays. The Religious Right did use the issue of gay marriage to rally conservative Christians to their cause and to get them to the polls. It worked. Church people were politically mobilized as never before in the U.S. elections, but for most of them gay marriage was only a symbolic expression of much broader concerns about what is happening in society.

There is a growing awareness that lines are being crossed that herald a complete breakdown of the canon of modesty and morality that most people affirm and which church people view as sacred.

What has become regular fare on television and in the movies has sent shock waves through the religious community. They are seeing things on television that they never imagined would come over the airwaves. It's that R-rated stuff that elicited their reaction and got them to vote the way that they did.

Twenty-five years ago no one could have imagined rap music that revels in explicit sex and couples it with violence. Who would have guessed that naked couples "making out" in bed would be common T.V. viewing? Was there any way of anticipating the deluge of bikini clad women simulating sexual acts and passing it off as dancing? Decadence seemed to descend on us without warning.

Please don't give me the bit that responsible parents can censor what comes into their living rooms by simply changing channels, because there's no way of knowing when the smut stuff will appear. What parent could have expected what Janet Jackson did at half-time during last year's Super Bowl game? And how does anyone know when the Viagra ads, with all of their

Re: Multiculturalism

In his article about multiculturalism Harry Antonides refers to the "American melting pot" (CC, Feb 21), but Will Herberg already indicated in 1960 that this form of assimilation was inadequate, substituting it with Protestant, Catholic and Jew.

Of course, the melting pot never was a reality because it excluded the Blacks.

In Canada there were also attempts at the melting pot. In 1838 Lord Durham's Report suggested assimilation of the French, a report that still does not sit well with the Quebecois. For a long time Canadian governments have tried to assimilate native people (part of the abuses associated with the schools come from this attempt). For

Reply: *Criticizing multiculturalism is hardly a sign of superficiality. Quite the contrary. Since multiculturalism is the reigning dogma, it is much more likely that the superficial will embrace it.*

For most Canadians, I'll wager, multiculturalism is little more than relativism, so it merits critique.

Our best minds haven't solved the problem of how to recognize and respect the uniqueness of individuals while limiting the exclusivist claims of the communities and traditions

suggestiveness, will be run?

When G-rated movies have unmarried people having "overnight dates," and television shows during prime time feature "reality shows" in which couples meeting for the first time go off to spend weekends together, there was bound to be a reaction.... and there was. In blue states across the nation people let it be known that they had values; that those values were being violated; and that they weren't going to put up with it anymore.

What was most unfortunate about this popular uprising against the disintegration of modesty and morality in the media is that gays became the brunt of people's upset. Almost all of the Evangelical Christians I met have no desire to deny gays their basic human rights. Most of them agree with George Bush and John Kerry – both of whom wanted gays to have all the rights and privileges that go with civil unions without calling them marriages.

Church people, for the most part, want gays to have equal justice. But political strategists figured out that putting gay marriage on the ballots of ten states would get the votes of a lot of religious people and give them the opportunity to symbolically express their outrage over the changing sexual mores of the nation.

The pundits thought that those religious people were out to get homosexuals. They were not! What's more, most of the Evangelical community is embarrassed that they are now viewed that way. It's just that they wanted to send a message to Washington that their values can no longer be ignored without political consequence.

Tony Campolo, Professor Emeritus at Eastern University, St. Davids, PA, is a popular lecturer and author.

Canada, multiculturalism has been a way to safeguard against these various questionable assimilation attempts.

Suggesting that multiculturalism is "The Road to Nowhere" is misleading and doing a disservice to large segments of the Canadian population. Do we really need this unbalanced view?

Antonides' superficial approach is perhaps nowhere more evident than indicating that he relies, partly, on Jack Granatstein's book *Who Killed Canadian History?* While an easy read, the book suffers badly from poor research and simplistic thinking.

Bert den Boggende,
Brooks, AB

in which their identities are rooted.

Even multiculturalism can't simply be accepting of all cultures, for most cultures are at odds with it. With the growth of Islam in Europe, this has become a critical issue.

Antonides doesn't claim to have solved that problem, but multiculturalism raises as many questions as it answers. After serving in the think-tank of the CLAC for many years and writing a number of books, Antonides has more than earned his credentials as a social commentator and critic.

A few questions about marriage

I know that the gay marriage debate is a big deal in Canada, especially in the Christian community. I'm a Christian, and I don't quite get all the controversy. I'd like to ask a few questions and make a few observations.

What are concerned and outraged Christian citizens really fighting for or against? What are they trying to protect all of us from? Is this a debate which should concern Christians at all?

Are they fighting to protect the word "marriage"? Gay couples already have all other matrimonial rights in Canada other than the right to have a civil marriage ceremony performed to officially recognize what already exists.

Let's imagine that we live in a world where students who completed all of their doctoral courses could only be called "Doctor" if they actually went to the graduation ceremony. Isn't it the course work that matters?

Why so much importance to the word "married" when you don't have to attend the graduation ceremony to be addressed as "Doctor"?

Are they fighting to protect family? Alcohol, unmanaged anger, violence and adultery have harmed thousands of families in Canada, I'm sure a much higher percentage than the percentage of gay people in the Canadian population.

Have these problems become too mundane to be controversial?

Are concerned citizens suggesting that gay people shouldn't live together at all, or that they should only be allowed to live in sin?

Are they saying that if gay people do choose to live together, they have to be celibate?

I think everyone should be precise about what they want. If you're going to tell someone what they can't have, be prepared to tell

them what they can have.

If another straight couple's marriage has no effect on my own marriage, how does a gay couple's marriage weaken mine, or threaten my family, or my children's future families?

I'd like to have this explained to me, because I don't see how it works.

I see a lot of families as a teacher, and I don't really see how any of them are going to be threatened by a gay couple getting married. Good parents aren't going to become bad parents because gay marriage is legalized. Well-behaved children won't become pimps and drug dealers because of gay marriage. What, exactly, is the looming crisis?

Am I the only one who sees Stephen Harper's hysteria over gay marriage as a desperate bid for the Christian vote?

And, by the way, what's up with his polygamy argument? If Jerry gets to marry Perry, than Harry gets to marry Carrie and Terrie?

Hmmmm. What's the next conservative-based fight going to be? Are Canadian meat-eaters going to rise up and insist that dinner be declared illegal for vegetarians?

Is it possible that all of these concerned citizens are afraid that gay marriages might work just as well as straight marriages? Considering how abysmally straight marriage is currently working in Canadian society, why are we so desperate to preserve it in its current state?

Are only straight people allowed to be that unhappy?

I think we all need to perform a few reality checks. Here they are:

Canada is not a Christian country;
Canada does not have a Christian government;

See Questions p. 6...

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Letters/Opinion

A letter from Holland

In Europe there are two positions on foreign politics. On the one hand, a Europe independent of and distanced from America (France, Schroeder's Germany). These are called the Europeans. And on the other hand, a Europe closely associated with America (England, The Netherlands, and the newest EU members from eastern Europe). The latter suffered greatly under the Soviets and got little help from Germany and France, so they opt for closer ties with America. This group is called the Atlantics. I am an Atlantic on principle.

I consider France to be the least trustworthy country in Europe except for the Baltic states. The Netherlands has gotten nothing but grief from France. In the division of the collective treasury of Europe, The Netherlands is the biggest loser, paying more than it receives, and France the biggest taker, getting more than it pays. France thinks of itself first, then again of itself, and then once again of itself. The European deal for agriculture has to be renegotiated. It involves millions in useless subsidies, but France is holding everything up because it profits the most from these subsidies.

When someone asks me, "Isn't Bush terrible?" I reply, "What about Chirac and Schroeder?" Every time I see Chirac on TV, I can't help but be reminded of a criminal organization. And whenever I see Schroeder, I ask myself, I wonder what lies he's going to tell us this time? And I'm not even talking about his sexual escapades and divorces.

...Questions cont. from p. 5

Canada enjoys separation of church and state;

Canada's constitution protects the rights of all individuals, including Christians and homosexuals;

Marriage is a civil union;

Canadian churches are not required to perform ceremonies that contradict Biblical teaching; Moral teachings in the epistles were written for believers;

Non-Christians may not think like Christians;

Diverting time, energy and money from real problems (poverty, crime, homelessness, unemployment, war, disease, starvation, to name a few) in order to fight legalization of gay marriage is dumb.

I think most Christians agree that it was wrong for missionaries – in the past – to force pagans to be baptized (i.e., force them to be like us). Does that mean that it's now right for us to force non-believers to not be married (i.e., force them to not be like us)?

If we truly believe that "in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: 'The righteous will live by faith,'" shouldn't we be focusing on teaching the gospel and letting it work in the

Clinton is nothing in comparison.

Europe is hopelessly divided. It is playing no role whatsoever in creating peace in the Middle East. It needed America to establish order in Kosovo. And now in Iraq it is leaving America to snatch its own chestnuts from the fire. Europe is more dependent on oil from the Middle East than America. France and Germany had oil contracts worth millions with Saddam Hussein. I've always maintained that Saddam abused the oil-for-food program on a huge scale and I've been proven right. In fact, it seems that things were even worse, and that Kofi Annan's colleagues have also stolen from the big pot.

I've said that America is the only remaining super power – and that's a good thing. The power is in good hands. That was not well-received by the anti-Americans, of which there are a good number in The Netherlands. I've also called the UN Security Council a lion with false teeth: it growls but it can't bite. Imagine, what if Russia or France were the only remaining super power – what a disaster!

I didn't oppose the war on Iraq. I supported it. Still do, even though no weapons of mass destruction were found. It was the only way to get rid of that horrible tyrant Saddam Hussein. I was amazed at the courage of the Iraqi people. They had the courage to go out and vote no matter how bloody the attacks, Muslim against Muslim, Sunni against Shia.

hearts of those who believe?

I'm not a bleeding-heart liberal. I'm not saying let's live and let live. I'm not suggesting that we let the world go to hell in a hand basket.

But I am saying, let's stop fighting things that don't really affect us. Let's stop making a big deal about something that we don't like because it's different and, for some people, icky. Let's stop insisting that people whose beliefs differ from our own must nevertheless live as we choose to live. Let's stop believing – in our ignorance and pride – that we're doing Canada a big favor by fighting gay marriage.

Let's be more concerned about our own lifestyle choices. Let's try harder to love our own families and to teach our own children to walk in the way of the Lord.

As Christians, let's try a little bit harder to live in a way that makes non-believers want to discover the truth that lives within us. Let's do our best to show by how we live why all people should desire to know God's will.

Let's recognize that the peace of God which transcends all understanding even transcends our own understanding.

Paul Hutton
Kentville, Nova Scotia.

In spite of all that, there was a 60 percent turnout, larger than in many European countries under peaceful conditions.

Without American pressure, there would be no negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians. Arafat was the biggest barrier to peaceful relations. He said he condemned the suicide bombings, but in actuality no attacks took place without his approval. And he was the biggest thief in the country, stuffing his pockets with the monies intended for the reconstruction of Palestine. After his death, it came out that he had stolen almost a billion dollars. Now that he's gone, the Palestinians can breathe a little. Now the negotiations are finally beginning.

The Christian and Druze minorities in Lebanon protesting against the presence of Syrian troops in their country are pro-Western. Syria is one of the most undemocratic countries in the world. American pressure can bring the beginnings of democratic development there too. These positive developments must be credited to America. Europe has been a negligible factor there.

About Bush. A leader should be judged not by his person but by how well he fulfills the duties of his office. I may not judge Bush as a person; I may only judge him by his policies. In this respect I see him in the same line as the great American presidents who rejected isolationism. He realizes that as a superpower America has a huge responsibility in resolving global conflicts and fighting

terrorism, the curse of our time.

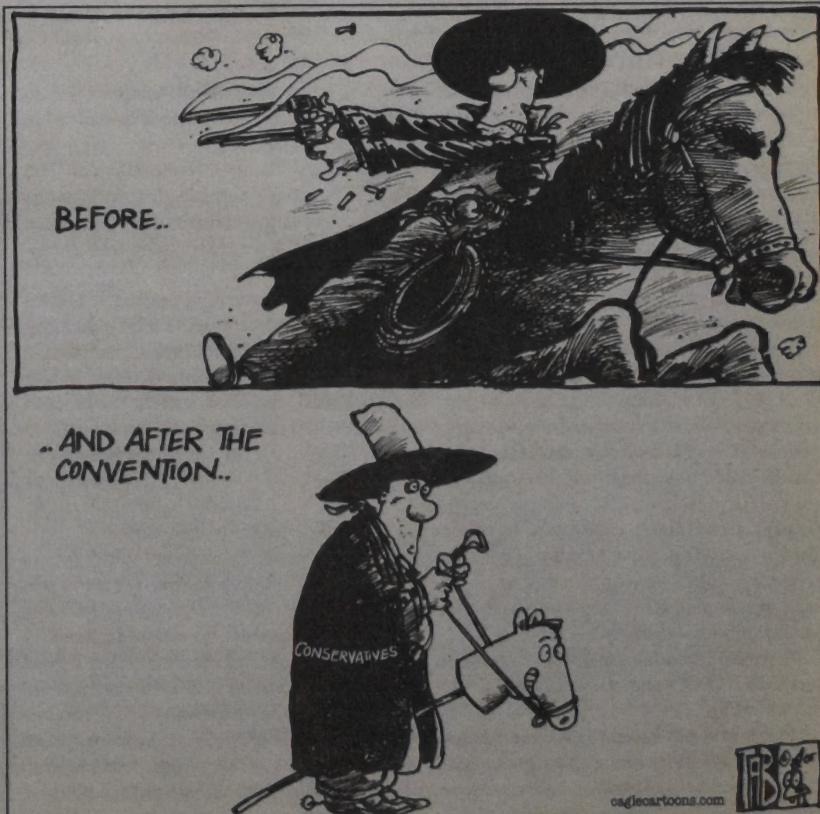
I don't see any difference between him and the great Democrat presidents. The differences between a Republican and a Democratic president in terms of foreign policy are less than is often claimed. I see a continuous line in American foreign policy over the last 80 years – to extinguish conflicts and spread democracy. In this Bush is playing a fine role.

But if there had been a Democratic president, would it have been any different? I'm not sure, but I find it hard to imagine.

Did Bush make any errors? I see no reason to doubt his integrity or that of Blair. But as far as I can judge he ought to have listened more to Powell than to Rumsfeld. Rumsfeld was like a bull in a china shop and made enemies unnecessarily with his remarks. More troops should have been sent to Iraq to provide security after the defeat of Saddam Hussein. Al-Ghraib and Guantanamo have stained America's presence in Iraq. Al-Ghraib may not have been Bush's fault, but he should have expressed his revulsion much more strongly and investigated it much more thoroughly – to the highest military levels.

That is, in brief, how I see things. I don't believe in the left-right polarity. Although I think the extreme left is a greater danger than the right, I believe the best politics seek the middle.

Gerrit Manenschijn
Retired Professor of Ethics at Kampen



Disciplines

The democracy dilemma

Steven E. Meyer

Is democracy on the march around the world? If so, is recent American foreign policy the reason for its progress?

The Bush administration wants to believe so and is taking every opportunity to make that case, especially since weapons of mass destruction were not found in Iraq and no operational ties were discovered between Saddam Hussein and Al Qaeda. Not only has establishing democracy become the primary justification for the Iraq war, but the triumph of democracy has become the centerpiece of the administration's reconstructed foreign policy, particularly in the Middle East.

Certainly, changes are taking place in that region and elsewhere, and we should applaud every development that helps to bring about greater justice in government and society.

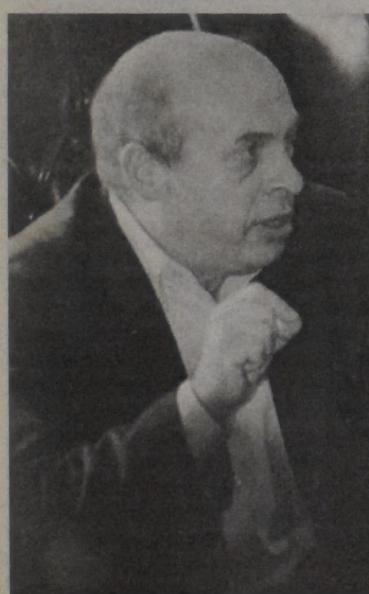
Yet most of the changes attracting attention have their sources not in outside pressure but in regional developments that have been brewing for a long time. Moreover, the changes taking place in the Middle East are immensely complex and it is impossible at this point to know where they will lead. Thus, it is premature to celebrate the march of democratic progress in the region – a lesson we should have learned from the recent retreat from the democratic experiment begun in Russia in the early 1990s. In fact, democratic forces in the Middle East could suffer a fatal blow if there is even a hint that Washington is pulling the strings.

As we watch American policy and events unfold in the Middle East we need to keep three basic points in mind.

First, how do we define democracy? Is it enough to hold an election, or do we need to see the establishment of solid institutions of government and civil society before declaring victory? Does democracy require one person one vote – a concept that is not fully understood in Islamic societies? Is it necessary to have independent political parties? If so, how many are necessary to constitute a legitimate democracy? Is it acceptable if the division of power and authority among different ethnic groups is prearranged outside the electoral process (as is done in Lebanon)? What happens if candidates and parties are elected that strongly oppose American policies and values? Will we attempt to unseat those anti-American

forces as we did in the Balkans during the 1990s? In short, how do we know when "acceptable" democracies have emerged?

Second, context matters. Each case in the Middle East is different and most of them call into question the proposition that democracy is on the march. For example,



Natan Sharansky, author of The Case for Democracy

Swinging into your career**Eternal Student**

Peter Schuurman



eling of an intentional Christian community, provides a richness that ingrains itself in your memory for life. This will also introduce you to friends who will become a part of the rest of your journey.

Career or calling?

On that note, I want to give a warning about careers. The word "career" comes from a Latin word meaning "race," and if a big career is the prime motivation of your life, you should be ready for the competition. You will need to sacrifice health and relationships if you want to make the big time. Recreational joggers don't make it to the nationals.

Recreational joggers may have a healthier life, though. At one of the public universities I attended the motto was "Your Career Begins Here!" – as if higher learning were about assuring your own security for life and not about pursuing wisdom in order to serve the world. Education, in terms of this model, is a passport to privilege rather than an investment in God's kingdom.

Christians are not made for careers, although careers are gifted to Christians. Careers come in a broader context – within a calling. A calling is not just a job, but is the whole forward movement of a child of God in life. A calling is co-operative rather than competitive, and it is as wide and deep as human life: it includes marriage, hobbies and community service. In your calling from God, all these gifts find their proper place.

Fredrich Beuchner said that your calling comes where your deep passion meets the world's desperate need. Your family and your community can provide you with a place to begin that journey. Whether you accept an apprenticeship, travel, or go the way of university, remember your prime calling is to be a citizen of the kingdom of God. Your character formation – always moving closer to the likeness of Christ – is the first and most vital ingredient of calling. To be like our loving Lord – who happened to cover the vocations of manual laborer, teacher, preacher, healer and king – is always our prayerful prime directive.

Peter Schuurman is the Christian Reformed Education Mission Leader and resides in Guelph, Ontario.



although Iraq's January elections went relatively well, that country will continue to be wracked by a vicious insurgency that will undermine effective democratic rule for a long time to come. In Egypt, the Mubarak government has opened the upcoming elections to other parties for the first time. But Mubarak's chief opponent is out of jail and on bail, and only those parties authorized by the government will be allowed to participate. In Saudi Arabia, half of the recent local council seats were determined by election – but only men could vote. Despite propaganda to the contrary, Beirut's popular demonstrations last week were not about establishing a democratic system; they were held in opposition to Syria's military presence.

Third, because democracy is the Bush administration's new foreign policy centerpiece, the administration has a

motive to trumpet democratic success in the Middle East even if there is relatively little to cheer about. In other words, if democracies are needed in the Middle East to lend credibility to our foreign policy, then democracies will be found.

Early last week, President Bush proclaimed that the "autocratic regimes in the Middle East are the last gasp of a discredited past." If so, that gasp is likely to be very long and very painful.

Steven E. Meyer, Professor of Political Science at the National Defense University (The views expressed here are the author's alone)

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Church

Faith can do what postmodernism can't – 'give life,' Wright says

Michael McCormack

NEW ORLEANS (BP) – "Living Christianly" is more than fulfilling a code of conduct – it is nothing short of a battle between God's empire and human empires, said N.T. Wright, an Anglican evangelical scholar and bishop of Durham, England.

Wright spoke at an event sponsored by the division of historical and theological studies of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary March 10 in conjunction with the inaugural Greer-Heard Point-Counterpoint Forum March 11-12.

Both the call to live the Christian life in a modern and postmodern setting and the potential for such living to impact the world were the focus of Wright's lecture before a standing-room only crowd in the seminary's Martin Chapel.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ, he noted, ushered in the beginning of this new purpose in life.

"The whole New Testament is written from the point of view that new creation has already begun – that it began when Jesus of Nazareth came out of the tomb on Easter morning and that through his victory over sin and death there are indeed real possibilities which were not there before," Wright said.

This new creation, he said, is most apparent in John's Gospel.

He noted, for example:

– Mary Magdalene, the first human to encounter the risen Jesus, mistook him to be a gardener, which echoes the Genesis 1 and 2 account of God in the Garden of Eden.

– Later in John 20, Jesus breathes on the disciples, thus reenacting the breath of life in Genesis 2.

– Jesus' reinstating Peter and commis-

sioning him to tend his sheep mirrors God's commission to Adam in Genesis 2 to tend the animals.

"The whole chapter of John 21," Wright continued, "has a sense of the disciples' calling to live in a strange, unmapped, new land, in a world never previously imagined because it was never previously possible, in a world in which one can follow Jesus."

Armed with the hope that comes from Christ's resurrection and from the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, possibilities now exist for lives to be healed and for communities to be mended, Wright said. Followers of Christ should strive to be the model and the means by which renewal comes about in the surrounding communities, he said.

"If we are even beginning to do any of this, we will also be, as part of our conformity to the pattern of the Son of God, people in whom the battle for the Kingdom of God becomes apparent," Wright said.

Indeed, living Christianly in the present postmodern society often proves to be a battle, he said, while noting that postmodernism also can be a positive agent for the spread of God's Kingdom.

"The task of postmodernism within the purposes of God has been to preach the Fall [of man in the Garden of Eden] to arrogant modernity," Wright said. "I regard this as a necessary task."

Modernism taught that mankind could rise to any level, even to the point of redefining good and evil and placing mankind in God's place, Wright said, whereas postmodernism's legacy is that it reminds proponents of modernism that knowledge leads to power and power often corrupts. However, postmodernism cannot complete

the task, he noted.

"Postmodernism can condemn, but it cannot give life," Wright said. "In putting down the arrogant modernist self, [postmodernism] collapses all human identity into a morass of invention and experience."

"It carries no possibilities of new creation," he said.

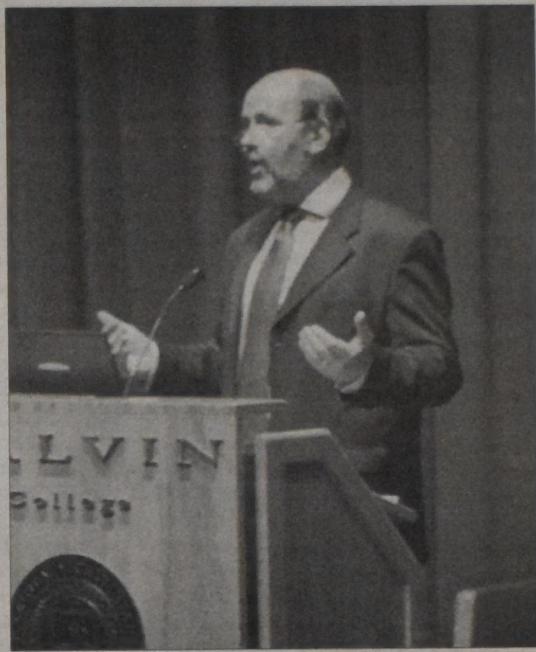
Christianity must take up the challenge where postmodernism falls short, Wright said.

"Though postmodernism has shown the modernist empire to be dangerous, it can't do anything about it. It can't stop it," he said. "Part of the task of living Christianity in today's world and living by a new creation is the task of finding a way through postmodernism and out the other side."

Wright challenged Christians to take seriously the part of the Lord's Prayer that says, "Thy will be done on earth," and to find confidence in Jesus' statement that "all authority in heaven and on earth" has been given to Him.

"We have to learn – and I think this is the most urgent ethical task of the 21st century – how to live as new covenant people in new creation, submitting neither to modernism nor to postmodernism nor to empires or anything of the sort but to the Gospel imperative," Wright said.

What would that look like in practice? How can Christians respond in such a way as to leave no doubt in the modernist's or



N.T. Wright at Calvin

postmodernist's mind that Christianity is the only solution? Wright offered several potential solutions:

He challenged Christians to work to bring freedom and justice to all peoples of the world. He also called for a renewed commitment to the sacredness of marriage.

"Marriage is a sign of God's future world, as Revelation 21 insists, and it is a sign that must be honored in every way," Wright said.

And he urged Christians to have a healthy respect and concern for the environment. This, at the least, would demonstrate an understanding that the new creation and new life offered in Christ includes the present world.

N. T. Wright defends resurrection in first point – counterpoint forum

Gary D. Myers

NEW ORLEANS (BP) – "Enormous forces in our culture are determined to deny that Jesus was raised from the dead," N.T. Wright, an Anglican evangelical scholar, said.

"Over and over again, they use arguments that can be shown to be invalid and propose alternative scenarios which can be shown to be impossible."

Wright and John Dominic Crossan, a member of the Jesus Seminar, voiced divergent views of the resurrection during the inaugural Greer-Heard Point-Counterpoint Forum at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary March 11.

Wright, bishop of Durham, England, defended the literal, bodily resurrection of Jesus as the only tenable view, while Crossan, a professor emeritus at DePaul University, set forth a metaphorical interpretation of the resurrection.

To begin the forum, each speaker was given 20 minutes to explain his beliefs. During the following dialogue, both Crossan and

Wright questioned each other and clarified their positions.

Wright began by examining some of the common attempts to explain away the resurrection. He said one argument proposes that ancient people did not understand the laws of nature and were, therefore, more inclined to accept unsophisticated answers.

"That is simply absurd," Wright said. "The ancients knew perfectly well that dead people didn't rise. We didn't need modern science to tell us that."

Others have pointed to Hellenistic and pagan stories featuring empty graves and visions of the dead as the reason the early church began to believe in the resurrection. But Wright said these stories are completely different from the biblical resurrection accounts.

The presence of resurrection beliefs in Judaism cannot account for the focus on Jesus' resurrection in the early church either, Wright said, noting that resurrection was peripheral in Judaism, or not a foundational

part of the Jewish beliefs. In Christianity, the resurrection of Jesus is central.

"I've shown conclusively that [the Apostle] Paul really did believe in the bodily resurrection despite generations of critics going back as far as the second century trying to make out that he didn't," Wright said.

The empty tomb and Jesus' appearances caused the early church to believe in his bodily resurrection, Wright said, noting that the empty tomb and the resurrection appearances taken together constitute a sufficient condition for belief in the resurrection.

"Having examined as many of the alternative explanations I could find and having shown them all to be completely inadequate, the one we are left with, however unlikely, must press itself upon us as being true," Wright said. "It is only with the bodily resurrection of Jesus, demonstrating that his death dealt a decisive blow to evil, that we could find the proper grounds for calling the kingdoms of earth to submit to the Kingdom of God."

Crossan, on the other hand, said he believes the mode of the resurrection is secondary to the meaning of the resurrection. Though taking a metaphorical approach to the resurrection, Crossan maintained that, whether one believes in a literal or metaphorical resurrection, the implications of the resurrection should make a difference in the world today.

"We are talking about cosmic transformation from a world of injustice, impurity and violence into a world of justice and peace and purity and holiness," he said.

Crossan denied that the empty tomb and the appearances of Jesus served as a sufficient cause for the rise of resurrection belief in the early church.

"That would get you to the exaltation," Crossan said. "It would get you to the conclusion that Jesus has been exalted, maybe even to the right hand of God.... Something else is absolutely needed to make that leap of faith [to belief in a literal, bodily resurrection]."

See Resurrection on p. 9...

Church

... Resurrection cont.

Crossan said Jesus' words about launching the Kingdom of God caused the early church to believe in the resurrection.

"If you want to debate what has to be taken literally and what has to be taken metaphorically, it is a perfectly valid debate," Crossan said. "But there is something else – the question of meaning."

Crossan said he would like to hear someone who takes the resurrection literally share the implications of that belief, asking how that belief could change the world.

"Tell me that from your literal reading," he said. "I will try, as one who takes it metaphorically, to spell out the implications from a metaphorical reading."

Those who disagree over the mode of the resurrection, whether literal or metaphorical, will find common ground in the area of meaning, Crossan said.

During the dialogue time, Wright pressed Crossan on the use of "literal and metaphorical." Wright argued for the use of the terms "concrete and abstract."

"Often we use the terms literal and metaphorical when, actually, we mean concrete and abstract," Wright said. "I do think it makes an enormous difference if you say that what happened on Easter day was not a concrete event."

Wright also challenged Crossan to explain the changes that occurred as believers in Christ moved from Judaism and other cultures to Christianity.

"Something happened which caused all those Christians from very different backgrounds to transform the beliefs their cultures had given them into this remarkable new shape," Wright said.

Crossan, however, spoke again of Jesus' teaching on the Kingdom of God.

"I think for me it's extraordinarily important that the historical Jesus, the Jesus of the Gospels, has already made an announcement," he said. "It is not that the Kingdom is beginning. It is that the Kingdom has begun. When He sends people out, I think these people ... experienced part of the Kingdom."

Crossan said he believes the early believers saw apparitions rather than the literal risen Jesus. The apparitions along with their experience with the Kingdom, Crossan said, caused the dramatic shift in their beliefs.

Wright responded, "I agree with you that Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom and their awareness of the power of God through the preaching of Jesus is one of the preconditions for the eventual interpretation at which they arrived." But, he said, "I don't think those by themselves would have been sufficient to generate anyone saying, 'He has been raised from the dead.'"

The forum continued on March 12 with a number of noted scholars responding to Crossan and Wright, including presentations by Gary Habermas, distinguished professor of apologetics and philosophy at Liberty University; Craig Evans, Payzant distinguished professor in New Testament at Acadia Divinity College; R. Douglas Geivett, professor of philosophy at Talbot School of Theology; Chuck Quarles, associate professor of New Testament and Greek at NOBTS; William Lane Craig, research professor at Talbot School of Theology; and Ted Peters, interim president at Pacific Lutheran Seminary. Responses from Wright and Crossan followed each speaker.

US Episcopal Church declares moratorium on appointing bishops

Chris Herlinger

New York, 18 March (ENI) – The bishops of the US Episcopal (Anglican) Church have declared a moratorium on the appointments of any new bishops until 2006, when the denomination holds its next general convention. The bishops also expressed "deep regret for the pain that others have experienced" after the 2003 consecration of openly gay V. Gene Robinson as bishop of the state of New Hampshire. The bishops hope the action will soften a crisis in the worldwide Anglican Communion, after the US Episcopal Church consecrated Robinson and at around the same time a Canadian Anglican diocese introduced a rite of blessing for same-sex unions.

"This extraordinary moment in our common life offers the opportunity for extraordinary action," the bishops stated on March 15 while meeting in Texas.

Leaders of Anglican churches around the world in February urged the North American churches to "voluntarily withdraw" from a key denominational body, the Anglican Consultative Council, for at least three years.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, the spiritual head of the Anglican Communion, welcomed the US bishops' statement as a "constructive response."

Frank Griswold, the US church's presiding bishop, told The Associated Press news service that the US church decided to halt all appointments of bishops – not just those of openly gay clerics – because it did not want gay and lesbian members to feel "demeaned."

The bishops said they would for a time not authorize public rites for the blessing of same sex unions, and they would not bless any such unions. However, at least

one bishop has said he will not force clergy to desist from presiding at such ceremonies.

The Rev. David Anderson, president of the American Anglican Council, a group that opposes the consecration of gay clergy, said the bishops' statements were "insulting."

And the Rev. Susan Russell, who heads the Episcopal gay advocacy group Integrity, said she had mixed reactions to the bishops' statement. She said it was "hugely positive" that they opted for a blanket moratorium on appointments of all bishops and did not single out homosexuals.

But, she told The Associated Press she believed the denomination was nonetheless saying to its gay and lesbian members "the Episcopal Church welcomes you, sort of."

African churches not winning the war on AIDS, leaders told

Fredrick Nzwili

Nairobi (ENI) – Leaders of churches in sub-Saharan Africa, the region of the world worst-affected by the AIDS epidemic, say they appear to be failing in their endeavors to get across the message about the disease to their people.

"We don't seem to be winning the war," said the Rev. Mvume Dandala, general secretary of the All Africa Conference of Churches in Nairobi.

UNAIDS, the United Nations' programme on HIV/AIDS, estimates that while sub-Saharan Africa has just over 10 per cent of the world's population, it is home to two-thirds of all people living with HIV.

Ignorance in this region of Africa

about the disease is contributing to its spread, Dandala told African church leaders gathered in the Kenyan capital from January 17 to 19. He noted that some churches are preaching that AIDS does not exist, and others are saying that those diagnosed with it can be healed by prayers.

"Such people are disempowering our people, who should know AIDS is real, is hurting us and has therefore to be fought and defeated," said Dandala. "We have to mobilize the African church into the realization that the disease has a capacity to annihilate all of us."

The church leaders noted that key government programs aimed at rolling back the pandemic are now using churches

as channels for treatment and care, but they expressed anxiety about the future of the programs, which are mainly donor funded.

"We should wake up or we are gone," the Rev. Malebogo Mothibi of the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa told ENI. "We should think of alternatives in case the funds dry up."

UNAIDS said estimates showed a steady increase in recent years in the number of people living with HIV in sub-Saharan Africa, even though the prevalence was roughly stable.

Still, the agency noted, stabilization did not necessarily mean the epidemic was slowing, as the number of AIDS deaths has also been increasing.

Sudan church leaders warn Darfur can spread conflict

Fredrick Nzwili

Rumbek, Sudan (ENI) – Church leaders in Southern Sudan are warning that a conflict in Darfur in the west of the country, that has displaced 1.5 million people, could jeopardize a peace agreement to end a separate civil war in their area of Africa's largest country.

"The [Darfur] war is not helping the peace agreement in the south. It should be stopped immediately," said the Rev. Samuel Ador, a Presbyterian minister who heads the department of church and society in the Khartoum-based Sudan Council of Churches.

In Rumbek, the future capital city of Southern Sudan, ordinary people appear to have been energized by the agreement, but Ador told ENI it could be hard to achieve peace if Darfur was still "bleeding."

Darfur has a humanitarian crisis triggered by a war between anti-government rebels and the Sudanese government.

There, mostly Arab pro-government militias, known as the Janjaweed, have been accused of killing tens of thousands of black Africans and pushing more than a million people from their homes.

Ador said the Sudan government would only win the confidence of the people if it showed more willingness to end the war in Darfur.

Some officials of the Sudan People Liberation Movement (SPLM) which fought for Southern Sudan's autonomy have agreed with church leaders in saying that the Khartoum government could be fanning conflict in Darfur. The SPLM is to form a government for Southern Sudan in June.

"I am afraid the government is treating only one part of the problem by signing a peace agreement for the south when it is fighting in the west," Kauc Nak, the secretary of the Rumbek district told African religious leaders from different faiths who visited on March 16.

The leaders, under the umbrella of the Inter-Faith Action for Peace in Africa, a process initiated by the Lutheran World Federation, have visited several areas in Southern Sudan to support the regional peace.

They were told that in areas controlled by the SPLM ordinary people had no basic resources such as water, food or medicines.

"We urge the international community to send support to Southern Sudan. We are suffering due to a lack of basic needs," said Nak.

Some non-governmental organization officials in Rumbek note that local people are awaiting the dividends of the peace agreement.

Said Taban Joseph, a programme officer with the Catholic Relief Service: "They want life to return back to normal, where they can get jobs. If this doesn't happen soon, the people could start asking whether it was worth the wait."

60th Anniversary

Visions and visionaries: selling Canada to the new immigrants

A special editorial on the front page of CC on Sept. 28, 1956 asks (in Dutch), "What have we started here in Canada?"

"Quite a lot," answers the writer. "We're not just looking to make a place for ourselves here, we are also looking for a future for our children - a fatherland. So we're not only concerned to earn our own living but we also busy ourselves with politics, the life of society, the press, education, radio and so on. We do this 'in faith' (with and without quotation marks) and at the same time with human calculation."

"We take into account, for example, that emigration from The Netherlands to Canada will stop. We certainly have no ambitions to colonize Canada, but to realize our ideals and spread our principles we can certainly use a few more Hollanders."

The editorial goes on to inform CC readers that there are other countries competing for Dutch immigrants. Australia, for example, is doing a lot of advertising in the Netherlands - with great success. However, the writer doesn't use the word "competition"; in fact, he commends the Australians and then urges Dutch Canadians to follow their excellent example. In other words, he urges CC readers to proclaim the virtues of Canada to prospective emigrants in Holland. Who better to undertake that task than those already here? He calls on the immigration committees of the CRC to double their efforts "to enlighten and make propaganda for the cause of the Calvinist immigration" to Canada and he commits *Calvinist Contact* to that cause as well.

There are now 60 Christian Reformed congregations in Canada, the CC of Nov. 19, 1951 proudly announces - 34 in the east and 26 in the west. In four years the CRC grew from 2,000 members to almost 15,000. The new churches need ministers who can preach in Dutch. Should these ministers come only from the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Gereformeerde), asked Paul de Koekoek (Dec. 15, 1951).

Although the latter is an official sister church of the CRC, he says, why shouldn't the Canadian churches be able to call ministers from other Reformed denominations as well? Quite a number of immigrants from other Reformed

denominations in the Netherlands have joined the CRC, so why shouldn't their ministers be welcome too? Why perpetuate the Dutch splintering in Canada?

De Koekoek pleaded for a vision of an ecumenical Reformed church big enough to embrace a variety of Reformed Christians from across the Atlantic. It was, alas, not a vision that prevailed. After a while, each denomination replicated itself here.

Canada's newest province, Newfoundland, makes an appearance in the pages of CC, Nov. 19, 1951. John Vriesinga titles his article: "Newfoundland on the threshold of a better future." Everyone, it seems, was dedicated to selling Canada to immigrants in those days. But Vriesinga's description of Newfoundland is realistic. He tells prospective immigrants that hundreds of towns in the province still don't have roads connecting them at this time, so that many Newfoundlanders depend on the sea to get to the next town. He also reports that there's a huge shortage of school buildings and teachers in the province, and that because of the lack of roads many children cannot reach the nearest school.

Newfoundland's "better future," according to Vriesinga is predicated on the fact that it had recently joined the dominion of Canada. This meant larger investments by companies eager to mine its vast natural resources, like gypsum and iron ore.

The people of Newfoundland, however, he tells us, were pessimistic regarding promises of a new future as citizens of Canada. One gathers that, despite the optimistic title, the field men for the CRC were also a bit sceptical and that the immigration societies were not planning to send a field man to Newfoundland.

A long article in the same issue of CC trumpets that 25 million acres of farmland in northern Canada await enterprising farmers. This is land for which one hundred years ago people fought and died for, says the (unnamed) writer. It's true, he concedes, there aren't enough roads and houses and there are no stores nearby. But when the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth, there was also a housing shortage and no roads whatsoever. This guy is

CANADA CENTRAAL IN "DRUKKNOP-OORLOG"



really convincing!

He points out that the pioneers who got rich raising cattle or grain or trapping fur didn't sit around waiting for someone to make it easier for them. They were men of courage. And that's all you need nowadays to make it in northern Canada - mental courage - for most of the hardships that loom in the north are imaginary. Yes, that's the word he used - imaginary!

Then he appeals to the pioneering spirit of the Dutch. "Anyone who considers himself capable of building his own house from logs and sods, anyone who can live with candles for a couple of years, anyone willing to make do with windows made from animal skins, anyone who still has something of that fading pioneering spirit can live a splendid life in the north. Yes, a rich future awaits him there."

The Russians, he suggests, have much more of a pioneering spirit toward the north. He must have been thinking of all those enterprising Ukrainians that migrated northward to Siberia under Stalin.

The general opinion, he admits, is that the north is an inhospitable environment. But, he replies, that's the way it has always been in history. The Egyptians thought Greece was too far north and the Romans thought England was fit only for barbarians.

Don't be such wimps, you immigrants, he cries. While here in Canada there are no cities over 50,000 north of Edmonton, in Russia there are at least 50 such cities.

Go north, young man, with your axe and your candles and your woolly longjohns and the future of Canada will rest in your callused hands.

Toward the end of the article the

writer reveals that he organized a couple of northern expeditions. In the first, all the men died. Only the Eskimo woman who accompanied them survived. A couple of years later (1923) an expedition of 12 men took possession of one of the northern islands, Wrangel, near the Arctic Circle in the name of Canada. But the Russians sent out a navy ship, The Red October (no, it wasn't an atomic submarine), took the men captive and declared the island to be part of Russia. A couple of years later, Russia established a colony on the island which is of huge strategic importance today (1951).

Wrangel Island is located due west of the northernmost tip of Alaska. It's a safe bet those Russians didn't settle there to grow tomatoes.

The article concludes that if the Russians can flourish on Wrangel Island then the entire Mackenzie River valley should be swarming with settlers and towns; it should be a Canadian Mississippi River valley. Ah, a visionary! Pity the Dutch immigrant who listened to such visionaries.

Here's one reason Wrangel Island became important - the cold war and the threat of Russian missiles carrying atomic warheads. The shortest route from Russia to the U.S.A. was over the Canadian north. The accompanying drawing appeared in the CC of Oct. 4, 1957 under the title "Canada central in push-button war." It shows missiles launched from Russia being intercepted by defensive missiles launched from Greenland. The Distant Early Warning Line (or DEW Line), constructed by Canada and the U.S. to detect incoming missiles or planes, was finished in the mid-50's.

The actual construction of the 58 sites across the Canadian arctic as well as Greenland and Alaska took place between 1955 and 1957. After 30 years it was gradually abandoned as obsolete. Some have suggested that it was virtually obsolete as soon as it was finished. Some sites were, in fact, already being shut down in the early 60's. The DEW Line was replaced by the North Warning System. Although the costs of construction and operation of the DEW Line were borne by the U.S., cleaning up after the closures cost Canada hundreds of millions of dollars. Cleanup began in the late 1990's and continues today.

CCAD 1952

Penmans

"27" GEMOLTONERDE ONDERKLEDING

In warmte, dracht en uithoudende kwaliteit is deze winter-onderkleding ideaal te overtuigen. Ontworpen op U-zelf gemakkelijk in te kleden, beweging in een zwaar gemoltonerde stof voor maximum warmte.

Hier is waarde voor Uw geld in Penmans zijn vakkundigheid. Verkrijgbaar in heren, broeken en combinaties voor mannen en jongens.

BEROEMD
sinds 1868

Stewardship

Not your father's China trade

China Inc. How the Rise of the Next Superpower Challenges America and the World

By Ted C. Fishman
Scribner's 342 pp., \$26

Reviewed by Todd Crowell

In the final analysis, it comes down to people, millions and millions of people – 1.3 billion people by the official count, officially probably closer to 1.5 billion people. "First and foremost, [China's] huge population changes the fundamental rules," says Ted C. Fishman, the author of *China Inc.*

These millions are drawn to factory towns nobody in North America has heard of that are larger than Chicago. These towns have become the new Ruhr Valley, the new Pittsburgh-Detroit, soon perhaps the new Silicon Valley. Three shoe factories in the city of Dongguan alone employ a quarter of a million workers.

No industry is safe from the inexorable pressure of these workers – from cheap, simple Christmas tree ornaments, made by the nimble fingers of thousands of women who haven't the faintest idea what an angel is, to sophisticated electronics components, car parts, and machine tools. Soon Chinese cars will begin to appear in American showrooms (or maybe Wal-Mart).

Of course, to simply say China has a lot of people is to state the obvious. The issue is how China has marshaled this enormous workforce to create the world's fastest-growing economy. This is the subject of Fishman's excellent and very readable new book, which deftly combines anecdotes and analysis to help us understand China's economic miracle.

Basically, the Chinese Communists broke centuries of feudalism to mould this inchoate mass of people into a disciplined workforce. Then the economic reforms set in motion by Deng Xiaoping in 1979 unleashed the pent-up entrepreneurial spirit of the Chinese people, producing a workforce that has become irresistible to the world's manufacturers.

Strangely, the still nominal Communists who run China have succeeded in turning Marxism on its head. Classical Marxism holds that capitalism is the final stage of human development before communism. In China, communism has become the final stage before the full fruition of capitalism.

When Japan Inc. seemed poised

to conquer the world, the iconic image of Japan's economic prowess was the fully automated automobile factory, robotic arms looking like arms of a giant praying mantis, sparks flying, not a human anywhere in sight. The iconic image of China Inc. is a row of young women, all wearing identical blue uniforms, hunched over an assembly line in an electronic-components factory, like an endless chorus line. Not a robot in sight.

Who needs robots when every day brings more and more recruits to the labor force from the countryside, more cogs, if you will, in the giant Chinese manufacturing machine, a vast floating population of migrant workers advancing on China's cities that is larger in itself than the entire American workforce? Therein lies the challenge for America and the rest of the world.

In retrospect it was not so difficult for America to meet Japan's challenge. Japan never based its competitive advantage on armies of low-paid workers alone, or its marketing strategy simply on price. Basically, Japan competed by raising standards of quality and productivity.

That gave America an opening for a comeback. Quality can be improved, productivity raised, robots replicated. It mainly took determination and capital. But how, short of annexing Mexico (which would still leave China three times as populous), do you compete with China's endless supply of workers?

Alas, the author offers few answers. China's millions, of course, are a potential market for US and other countries' products, and the number of people with the wherewithal to buy things is large and rapidly growing. But for many US manufacturers, the Chinese market is a double-edged sword. Fishman says.

Any exporter faces the prospect that its technology will be assiduously studied, dissected, and replicated at a much lower cost. This doesn't even take into account outright piracy. As Fishman points out, piracy of computer operating software not only robs Microsoft (which seems strangely tolerant about it) but also gives industries that use computers an advantage across the board.

The term "economic miracle" has been overworked since the

Budgeting Rule #1: Spend Less Than You Earn

We hear and read much these days about stewardship and how we are to be good stewards of all that God has given us because he owns it all. Sometimes it's more difficult to put that teaching into practical terms, especially when we're just new to it. This article (written by my colleague Greta Luimes) is the first of a series of three articles based on Ted Boer's book *Three Simple Rules – Guaranteed to Improve Your Finances*. (Contact me for a copy, \$6.50 including shipping, or visit www.ThreeRules.org and download your own free copy.)

What are those three incredibly simple, common sense rules?

1. Spend less than you earn.
2. Save now, buy later.
3. Know debt.

We'll begin by discussing rule #1: Spend less than you earn. It sounds so logical, doesn't it? But in today's marketplace we are bombarded with advertising that says "Buy NOW, don't pay until 2006!" It's awfully tempting, to spend now and pay later, especially when we've persuaded ourselves that we really need the item in question and we figure that we should have enough time to save the money before the payment comes due. It especially seems tempting when you're just setting up your first home or when you see your neighbour doing the same thing.

One of the realities of this decade is that many people have better incomes, but they never seem to have enough. Many today spend more than they earn. Where does the extra money come from? It's usually borrowed on a credit card, a line-of-credit, or it's taken from the money that was supposed to go to a savings account (see rule #2).

In his book, Ted suggests 7 simple disciplines that will help us all to spend less than we earn.

1) Understand your paycheque. Realize that our gifts to God come off the top, taxes come next (usually before we've even received our pay) and saving should come third. We need to learn to live on what's left after these three areas are covered.

2) Can't afford it, then don't buy it. Asking ourselves these questions will help: Do I have the cash to buy this? Will I need this money for anything else in the future? Should I buy this item or save the money for later? Is this item the most pressing thing on the list of things I need or want?

3) Don't buy on impulse. Walk past the low-priced items close to the checkout counter. If you didn't go in to buy them, you probably don't need them.

- 4) Biggie-size your French

end of World War II. First came the "German miracle," then the Japanese miracle, then the Asian Tigers miracle. But the rise of China in the past 20 years has truly been miraculous.

One can cite the usual statis-

Reflections on Stewardship

Rick De Graaf

fries but not your home and car. Many of us fall into the trap of buying more house than we need, and as expenses increase over time, our budgets become tighter and tighter. It's awfully tempting then to compromise on other more important areas of spending like tithing and saving.

5) Think used. Almost everything we buy used will be less expensive up front and less expensive in the long run. Studies show that a used car can reduce your car expenses by 50%, and used clothing, furniture, toys, etc. can save you more than 70%.

6) Pay cash. We can save ourselves the cost of interest by paying cash, and we're less likely to overspend if we decide we must have the cash in our pockets to purchase anything.

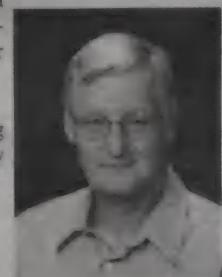
7) Plan your spending. Tracking our monthly spending for 30 to 90 days will reveal where our discretionary money is going. Once we have an idea about what's actually happening to our paycheques, we can create a budget that will keep us on track.

Stewardly Tip: Why not track your spending for 30 days by writing down every penny that you spend? You will be surprised at how much money most families spend on coffee stops, convenience store dashes, lunches out, etc. Create a history over a few months if you really want to get a grip on your spending habits. The process is strenuous but the rewards are great!

Readers: Share your 'Stewardly Tips' so that we all can make better use of the resources God has entrusted to us. Submit your suggestion and your contact information so that we can acknowledge your contribution or ask for more details.

Next issue: Budgeting
Rule #2: "Save Now! Buy
Later."

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good news for China. For the rest of the world it is a mixed blessing, posing a supreme challenge for the 21st century.

Todd Crowell is a Seattle-based economics writer with experience in Asia.

The body

Ron de Boer

Have you ever sat waiting for your doctor and, after reading every joke in the Laughter is the Best Medicine section of the Reader's Digest, discovered one of those three-dimensional plastic pictures of the human body hanging on the wall? You know, that yellowish, faceless human with the highways of blood vessels running down every limb and the ligaments and tendons that keep everything attached? Have you ever stared at that picture and wondered how in the world that complex mechanism even works?

If you're like me, you start thinking about your own body. My brain actually looks like that chunk of gray granite? My rib cage is solely in charge of protecting my heart and all those other soft places that we pray about every Sunday morning? The blockage of that one skinny little carotid artery in my neck could give me a stroke and send me to heaven's waiting room? Looking at that picture, the human body seems incredibly fragile.

Scientists have said that compared to animals, our bodies couldn't survive much physical adversity. We can't keep ourselves warm without shopping at Sears; we have soft easily penetrable skin on which we apply creams and sensitive soaps to make softer; we have fingernails - our version of claws - but we bite them down or at best use them to scratch ourselves. Our ears fail us, our hair follicles betray us and an entire consumer industry makes millions off of our pathetic eyesight.

Yet, despite all of these outward inadequacies, the human body's capacity for survival is unbelievably tough and resilient because of the way it was created. Little armies of blood cells fight off invading intruders; involuntary muscles tighten our skin when we are cold; our blood clots so we don't bleed to death after a paper cut.

Aside from tonsils, appendixes and nipples for men, most of the details of our bodies are both astounding and necessary, yet we spend very little time praising the Creator for those particulars because we're too busy snarling at the pain in our backs or the cold virus that has come to roost in our nasal caverns. The human body is an amazing machine - far more complex than any computer created by Bill Gates.

Noses, knee caps and eyebrows

Take nose hair. Most of us complain about nose hair and are embarrassed when we raise our nostrils to the mirror and realize a couple of rogue hairs poking out of their caves. We reach for the scissors and snip away for fear that tufts of nose hair will begin sprouting. But nose hair plays an important role in filtering out the dirt and dust we inhale every day. Without nose hair, our lungs would give out sooner in life. So the next time you

see someone with nose hairs, don't scoff. That's someone extending his life.

Or consider the position of your nostrils. Notice how they point downward? That's a brilliant detail. If they were on the tops of our noses, imagine walking in the rain? Or what if they were mere holes in our faces? Not only would people not want to look inside your nose, but dust would blow into your head regularly. You'd have to grow long nose hairs, and soon you'd look like someone crawling out of a Saturday afternoon movie lagoon. Thank God for nostrils that point down.



Oops! Time for the nose umbrella!

What about your knee cap? Imagine if God had forgotten to attach it? We'd be wobbling around with legs like Slinkies. Imagine the Olympics if knee caps were not a part of the human body. The American high jumper wobbles toward the pole, she sets to jump - oh, no! - her leg has buckled and she lands on her hairy nostrils!

Or your eyebrows. Ever question why you have two strips of hair above each eye? Scientists say this facial hair is indicative that man evolved from apes - that we retained this facial hair. That's hooey. God gave us eyebrows to keep the rain and sweat out of our eyes. Notice how the hair is arched toward our temples? Next time you're walking in the rain and thankful your legs aren't wobbling and your nostrils are under your nose, take notice how your eyebrows re-route the rain from your forehead to your temples. Eyebrows are also the most expressive facial feature we have besides our mouth. We raise them up and down when we're excited; we raise one when we are perplexed; we knit them together when we're mad or concentrating. The eyebrow - celebrate it today.

Reflexes

We could go on and on, talking about the necessity of fingernails, ear wax and armpit hair - all amazing pieces of the body we take for granted. But what about those involuntary habits the body

just does on its own - sneezing, hiccupping and yawning? According to doctors, these reflexes are involuntary actions or movements that occur in response to a stimulus.

Did you know that every time you yawn a complex form of communication is passing through your sensory neurons, spinal chord and brain - all in milliseconds? I dare you to find a computer that can process that quickly.

We never consciously decide to sneeze, yawn or blink. Reflexes serve as primitive responses that protect our bodies from danger and help us adjust to our surroundings. We sneeze when we need to clear our nasal air passages of irritants and allergens. We blink when danger threatens the sensitive tissues of the eye and when we need to moisten and clean the cornea. (This reflex, doctors say, occurs 900 times an hour - between the last paragraph and this one, I blinked 865 times!) We yawn when nerves in the brain stem find there's too much carbon dioxide in the blood. A yawn makes the muscles in our mouth and throat contract and forces our mouth wide open, allowing us to expel carbon dioxide and take in a large amount of oxygen-rich air.

Am I the only one amazed by the biological wonder of the yawn?

Imagine our lives without these built-in software programs. We'd be constantly fighting infections, breathing problems and blindness. Without knee caps, nostrils that point down and eyebrows, we'd look like creatures from the imagination of some science fiction comic book writer.

Pop-up messages

God sure knew what he was doing, didn't he? And to think he based it on no known model! He truly is the Great Physician. It has taken us mere humans since creation to figure out the details of the body and we're still baffled by many things: why does our immune system

decide to shut down, or what causes Alzheimer's in our brains? But God understood all of these things before they were even created. It has only been in the last century that we have figured out how to combat diabetes and infections with the inventions of insulin and penicillin. In fact, that plastic picture of the intricacies of the human body wouldn't even have been possible just a few hundred years ago.

Our bodies are very much like computers. When we think of computers, we envision the outside - the keyboard and monitor. But it's the hardware and software on the inside that is the soul of the computer. There, all the decisions and functions originate; there, all the memory exists.

I'm always amazed how easily computers are now able to communicate with us. If there is a problem with my computer, a little grey box immediately pops up and tells me. Our bodies also speak to us - and I don't mean the sounds it makes! Little pop-up messages come to us by way of bags under our eyes, muscle twitches and blood-shot eyes. When our bodies are in distress, we feel it - sore backs, indigestion, the shivers. When our bodies talk to us, we do well to listen and upgrade our systems - get more sleep, exercise more, or get to the doctor.

Yet, many people don't just ignore the pop-up messages, they go out of their way to abuse their own bodies. Think of the computer example again. Imagine all the time you spent researching and saving the money for that computer. Think back to that first day when you set it up. You stood back and admired its looks and capabilities. Now imagine taking tar and smearing it all over the insides of that computer - right on the hard-drive, the mechanism that runs the computer. Or worse, imagine if your computer gained the ability to tar itself so that it became slow, incompetent and unhealthy. Wouldn't Bill Gates, whose image the computer was created in, be upset if everyone treated their computers like this, despite the thick manual he sent to you about how to treat your computer?

Imagine what God thinks when he sees humans abusing their wonderfully made and far more valuable bodies? We smoke, over-eat, under-eat, drink excessively, expose our hearts and nervous systems to lifelong stressful contexts such as jobs and self-inflicted



Before the invention of knees, socks were a problem.

The body

worry. God must just shake his head and cry out, "These are the perfect humans I once created?"

We build factories that pollute the air we breath, we spray pesticides on the earth on which we walk, and we eat fast food on the run because we're too busy to make good healthy food for ourselves.

User manual

And even though he states explicitly in his Human User Manual, the Bible, that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit (Cor. 6: 19) and important for little else, we humans now take these bodies and botox the wrinkles out of our faces and spend billions of dollars a year on plastic surgery to correct drooping eyes and drink liquid supplements to build up our muscles. A recent study showed that more and more young women are choosing breast enhancement because of our culture's emphasis on this body part.

Are we really bringing honor to God with our bodies with this obsession in altering it? Or are we honoring the cultural trend setters who tell us the perfect, media body is the one most desirable? Body as mall as opposed to body as temple.

Human descent

The other day I picked up Charles Darwin's book *The Origin of Species*. Darwin, the scientist whose views most Christians think come from the devil himself, theorized 150 years ago that humans could not have been placed on this earth with the bodies we now see in the mirror each morning. He says "that our species was not independently created, but descended from other species." Darwin's theories of evolution, as my science teacher neighbor will tell me, are far more complex than merely saying man descended from apes, but it stands that Darwin takes God out of the equation of our existence today. Under Darwin, I'm to believe we happen to be the only living species that sits down and plays board games or invests our money



Teacher sent me home to get defragmented and debugged.

More progress needed on the role of women in the CRC

In June of this year, Synod of the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) will return once more to the question of women serving in the offices of minister, elder, or evangelist in the denomination. Those with long memories will recall that the question has been discussed in the denomination for more than 30 years, and that in 1995 in a landmark decision, Synod allowed local churches and regional assemblies (Classes) to declare the CRC Church Order's qualification for holding office to be "male" non-operative. At the same time it was decided to uphold the "male" qualification for delegates attending the annual Synodical assemblies. The decision was reviewed in 2000 with no substantial change, and is now to be reviewed once again five years later, at Synod 2005.

In 2003, Synod struck a committee to develop recommendations for the 2005 review, and recently the report of the committee has been distributed to the churches for study and reaction, in preparation for the discussion at Synod in June. In its mandate to the committee, Synod 2003 specified the following guidelines: 1) it is expected that the committee solicit responses from congregations and classes as to the impact of the 1995 decision locally, and 2) that the committee make recommendations honoring the declaration of Synod 1995 that both perspectives on women in ecclesiastical office (i.e. open to women and men, or open to men only) could be defended from Scripture. The latter was eloquently demonstrated in the report of the Synod 2000 study committee.

The recommendations of the Committee's (majority) report to Synod 2005 essentially call for maintaining the status quo, with minor changes. This means that local classes and congregations have the option to open all offices to women or leave them closed to women. It also maintains the prohibition on women delegates to Synod. A minority report recommends removing this prohibition. Presently about 46% of classes have opened all offices to women, subject to local congregational approval.

The report to Synod 2005 relies heavily on a survey of congregations and classes, as was mandated. The survey of congregations resulted in a response rate of just over 50%, not overwhelming given the fact this issue has occupied so much time and energy in the denomination over the last 30 years.

The questionnaire asks about the impact of the 1995 decision locally, and whether there should be changes made in the current regulations. On the basis of the responses, the committee concludes that the issue still divides the denomination, that any further change would threaten denominational unity, and that therefore the status quo should be maintained.

Significantly, the response rate of smaller, newer, and ethnically diverse congregations was very low. The report notes this with some concern, but judges the survey to be statistically valid

for long-term profit. Under Darwin, I'm to believe that those monkeys hanging from my aerial at the African Lion Safari will one day be taking collection in church?

I think not.

The Human User Manual tells us exactly how we came to be - we were created in the image of God. And we were perfect. Per-

fect knee caps, perfect nose hairs, perfect eyesight. Period. Then sin came and we needed contact lenses and reconstructive surgery on our ACLs.

American author Mark Twain once said, "Man is the only animal that blushes. Or needs to." In Shakespeare's day, people believed humans to be the least of the angels and the greater of the animals. We know that Adam and Eve blushed in the Garden after they sinned. They were there from the beginning of time, the only creatures who were created to worship God and who recognized their shame in being naked.

Building Trust

Vicky Van Andel Ed.



nevertheless. One could ask whether, given the low response rate, the issue is less important in these congregations. If that is so, one could question the report's conclusion that the matter is still as divisive throughout the denomination as the survey suggests.

The questionnaire that was used focuses for the most part on how the decision of 1995 giving a "local/classical" option to allow women to serve as elders and ministers has been viewed by the congregation. In many of the questions, there seems to be an emphasis on how members have reacted to the decision, and how it has affected their view of the issue itself. What appears to be missing from the survey are questions regarding ways the ministry of the congregation was enhanced and/or hindered by women serving as office-bearers. Admittedly, these questions could only be answered by those congregations currently having women serving in council. However, responses to such questions could be very significant. Judging by anecdotal evidence we have observed in the congregations in our community, the church's ministry to its own members as well as externally is greatly enhanced by having women serve as elders, deacons, and ministers.

It is time to get beyond the theoretical discussion of the role of women in the church to the practical consequences of allowing women to serve, especially when the denomination has officially declared that women serving in the offices of the church can be defended on the basis of Scripture.

In view of the official declaration of Synod that the Scriptures support the perspective that women are not to be prohibited from serving in church offices, in fact reiterated as part of the mandate of the committee, it is regrettable that a majority of the committee did not see its way clear to remove the glaring inconsistency in allowing women to serve as office-bearers locally but barring them from attending synod as delegates. This is an inconsistency as well as an injustice, perpetrated in the name of not giving offence to those who object. It is time, after 10 years of positive experiences associated with the contributions that women are making in the ministry and leadership of the church, to move forward and remove this humiliating prohibition.

It must be noted that the minority report which calls for allowing women to be delegates to Synod is signed by all the women, and only the women on the Committee. We sincerely hope that Synod will take note of this, see the inconsistency in our current practice and adopt the minority report. Justice demands it. No survey results can override that.

Henk and Vicky Van Andel

Vicky Van Andel is the editor of this column. Anyone who would like to contribute to this column is invited to contact her via fax at 1-780-473-0970 or e-mail at vickyv@telus.net

Aristotle said all things have a beginning, a middle and an end. We're born wrinkly little turtle-like creatures, we grow arm-pit hair, watch our heads turn gray, and then we die wrinkly little turtle-like creatures. In that final chapter, the body counts for nothing. It's beautifully made and beautifully used. But it's only temporary. What's inside is what lives on.

In heaven, we get a new body. And it will be perfect again.

Biblical wisdom

A. A. Van Ruler

For everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven. (KJV)

There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven. (NIV)

Ecclesiastes 3:1

At the end of the last chapter, the Preacher said that things are so ordained that one person is able to enjoy things while another cannot. The Preacher was not content simply to confirm this fact of experience, but he formulated it theologically. He said, "Our ability or inability to enjoy things resides in God's good pleasure." Therefore, there is a time and season for enjoyment – but there is also, in stark contrast, a time and season to refrain from enjoying things.

He now puts this into a much broader context.

Actually, everything in life has its own time and season. In a broad, arbitrary gesture, the Preacher gathers up a number of examples. He mentions being born and dying; planting and uprooting; killing and healing; breaking down and building up; weeping and laughing; mourning and dancing; scattering stones and gathering stones; embracing and refraining from embracing; seeking and losing; keeping and throwing away; tearing and mending; keeping silent and speaking; loving and hating; making war and making peace.

This list expresses, first of all,



Rembrandt philosopher meditating

an awareness of the variety of life. We human beings do not keep doing the same thing; we do many different things. This in itself is a bright side of existence. This variety breaks up the monotony and boredom; it introduces surprise and suspense.

However, this isn't what the Preacher focuses on in this context. In these examples, he has his eye on the contradictory and conflicting elements of life. It is

not the case that every time we do something different, it beautifully complements and completes what we did before, and that everything is part of a single grand harmonious, completed existence.

This is not to deny that things may sometimes appear to be like this too. In Romans 8, for example, the apostle Paul says that for those who love God all things work together for good. But here the Preacher is overcome with an awareness of brokenness of existence.

One time we do one thing, and another time we do exactly the opposite. The one doesn't complement the other; they cancel each other out. One time we bring forth life, another time we die. One time we plant and the next time we uproot what we planted.

When we become aware of this, that is, when we arrange things according to this pattern, there is indeed something about it that perplexes us. Is reality in revolt against itself? Is it destroying itself? Why then does it still exist?

The Preacher, of course, means to say that all these contradictory and conflicting facts, too, rest in God's good pleasure. Each has its own hour and its own season. God has made everything beautiful in its own time (3:11). That is, each possesses its own beauty and goodness. We may even marvel at the thought that the Lord God is able

purely in God's good pleasure. Therefore, we cannot fathom the underlying reason. If we begin to dwell on this, the variety of life appears as capriciousness.

Reality itself contains something unpredictable. This is a much bigger problem than the fact that we cannot fathom its possibilities. "What does the worker gain from all his toil?"

Man is indeed endlessly busy, energetically doing and striving. He wants to make something of life and of the world. This is also a task God has given to him. But the results of his efforts no longer rest in his own hands.

Things often end up much different than he had reason to expect on the basis of his efforts. His deeds are incomprehensibly overshadowed by destiny. It could also be said that in some incomprehensible way destiny transcends the deed. In his deeds man intends things one way, but the Lord God in his good pleasure ordains things differently.

So we have a new problem. Man is unable not only to comprehend the why of things as they happen, each in their own time, but he also is unable to control them. Not only does our thinking fall short, our actions too fail.

When we discover this, there is always the danger that we begin to think that our actions are meaningless. Some go as far as to refuse to do their duty – that is, to act and to do so in accordance with God's commandments. They are tempted to either do nothing at all, or to act arbitrarily in accordance with their own appetites and whims.

This again is certainly presumptuous. We must act. And we must act well. But we must not suppose that reality is purely and solely our own doing. Our destiny is larger than our deeds.

Reality is still much more the work of God than the work of man. With our actions we are taken up into the much larger actions of God. In all our doings we must, to the end, respect the factors of God's freedom and good pleasure, of the incomprehensibility and unpredictability of things. These can give life a grimly uncertainty and contradiction. But it is precisely these irrational elements in life that show that we are not acting on our own but that we are involved with God, our Creator and Lord.

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Christian Living

Spiritual makeovers don't disappoint God is the ultimate source of affirmation

Lisa M. Petsche

Be beautiful inside, in your hearts, with the lasting charm of a gentle and quiet spirit which is so precious to God. 1Peter 3:4

Is anyone else annoyed – or disturbed – by the prevalence of personal makeover shows on television? I'm particularly dismayed with the ones that go beyond hair, makeup and wardrobe changes.

As with other reality shows, participants subject themselves to humiliation, in this case criticism of their appearance by strangers telling them their eyes look tired, their complexion is uneven, their hair too dull, skin too damaged, teeth too crooked or yellowed, body parts too big or too small and clothes too unflattering.

The focus is on projecting a more culturally appealing – especially youthful – image in order to attract more attention and increase social or career opportunities.

Constantly bombarded by unrealistic images of physical beauty in the media, many of us find ourselves feeling inadequate about one or more aspects of our appearance – facial features, other body parts or our overall size and shape.

The beauty industry capitalizes on our insecurity, keeping us coming back for more product or service, in a quest to achieve that elusive state of perfection that's "guaranteed" to make us feel powerful and attractive.

Sadly, beauty is much more highly valued in our culture than inner traits like intelligence and integrity. Evaluation based on physical appearance, combined with celebrity worship, has led to a never-ending series of fad diets, weight loss products and exercise gadgets, an increase in eating disorders and, most recently, a growing demand for cosmetic surgery. We're at war with our bodies ("fighting wrinkles" and "banishing cellulite," for example), in some cases willing to undergo costly and invasive treatments to alter our features or turn back the hands of time – a losing battle since even artificial good looks fade.

Fortunately, God is ready, willing and able to satisfy that longing. We need only open our hearts to him.

He created us in his image and he loves us unconditionally, despite our imperfections. Each of us is unique and gifted in his eyes.

Any worldly affirmation pales in comparison.

A pastor once shared with me an acronym for JOY: "Jesus and Others before You." In other words, putting ourselves last brings happiness. Or, as the Peace Prayer of St. Francis goes, "It is in giving that we receive" – a radical concept in today's egocentric culture.

Given this truth, and the reality that we're all sinners by nature, we'd do well to focus on making over our inner selves instead.

This involves looking deep inside ourselves to the imperfections that keep us separated from our Creator and one another, and determining how we can use the talents God has given us to build his kingdom here on earth.

Unlike physical makeovers, though, spiritual transformation offers no quick fixes; results are subtle, occurring gradually over time. And although we may seek guidance, it's up to us to effect the desired changes.

While physical makeovers are self-focused, the spiritual kind require us to set aside our ego. Yet another difference: major exterior makeovers are limited to people with significant financial resources (or enough desperation to expose their imperfections on national TV), while inner makeovers require only the desire and commitment to engage in them, making them available to all.

And while looks don't last, the results of a spiritual makeover can. Spiritual transformation is not an end in itself, though, but rather an ongoing process that brings us closer to our Heavenly Father.

The bottom line is that physical makeovers can't produce the security or fulfillment their spiritual counterparts can. That's because, whether or not we admit it, all of us long to be valued for our inner beauty, since looks – along with wealth, status and other superficial sources of identity – can vanish at any time.

Fortunately, God is ready, willing and able to satisfy that longing. We need only open our hearts to him.

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Lisa M. Petsche is a clinical social worker and a freelance journalist specializing in spirituality and family life.

"You may call me Mr. —"

This month I will turn 31 years young. At this age, and for the past few years, I am at the transitional period in my life where some of my former teachers and leaders are becoming my colleagues, contemporaries, and dare I say peers. Of course, this evolution means that those same people whom I used to address with a prefix of Mr., Mrs., or Ms. are now asking me to call them by their first names. Although it feels awkward to now call some of my former high school teachers by their first name, since I graduated into this new social sphere it only seemed right to make this shift.

When I was in my teens, it was customary to call anyone over 30 Mr., Mrs., or Ms. This was true for my teachers, most of the adults in my church, my parent's friends and especially when addressing those who were to be respected. In fact, the reason we were taught to address others as Mr., Mrs., or Ms. – and why I will teach my children the same – is to show respect.

During those high school years, when I was saying Mr., Mrs., and Ms. to my elders, I was involved in a program called Friendship. Friendship is a wonderful ministry for individuals with developmental possibilities. In my current dealings with many different organizations, I hear nothing but admiration for Friendship. It truly is a tangible sign that God is working his purpose out. During those nights of Bible study, crafts and music for adults with special needs, I was never asked to address any person at Friendship with Mr., Mrs., or Ms. regardless of their age.

While the spirit of Friendship is much more informal than regular life, it now seems to me that this was unbalanced. I was calling the people at Friendship by their first names while addressing other adults, some even younger than those at Friendship, with the title of respect. At Friendship it was commonplace to call people four times my age by their first name, something that would not be permitted in other circles.

This inequality seems strange to me. I was addressing two people with the same age but different

My window seat

Mendelt Hoekstra



genes in a dissimilar way. Why does one person merit the respect of a prefix and someone else of the same age not? Are we implying that some 40-year-olds deserve this courtesy but some 50 year olds do not? Should the title Mr., Mrs., or Ms. be based on something other than age?

We teach our two-and-a-half year old son to say Mr., Mrs., or Ms. when speaking to adults in my church for the plain and simple reason of respect. We teach him to show respect in a similar way when he encounters adults with special needs. Instead of Tim or Marie, we teach him to say Mr. Tim and Ms. Marie. Our practice was confirmed after our son's first introduction to a gentleman with special needs. I instructed our son to call him Mr. Martin instead of Martin. The next day I asked Martin if he was comfortable with how our son addressed him he replied, "I like Mr. Martin. I could use the respect."

I hope this practice of showing respect to people older than you by calling them Mr., Mrs., or Ms. isn't an old fashioned tradition that will soon be lost. In other languages they have a different "you" when addressing elders. I wish that had transferred over to English.

Merely addressing an elder with Mr., Mrs., or Ms. does not necessarily show respect, but it sure seems like a nice start. Showing respect and honor should not depend upon when you were raised but rather how you were raised. After all, kindness and gentleness are not inherited traits; they are learned behavior.

P.S. If you ever have a chance to volunteer at a local Friendship program, I am certain that you will be blessed.

Mendelt D. Hoekstra is the founder and director of the Music Therapy program at Bethesda, an organization owned and operated by the Mennonite Brethren Conference of Ontario, that supports adults with developmental possibilities. He lives in Vineland, ON with Marisa and their two children.

Protestant, Calvinist, Evangelical



Martin Luther

In his *The Reformation*, Diarmad MacCullough tells us that many labels for Christian groups started out as a smear, like the label "Christian" itself. "Calvinist" was first a term of abuse, he says. And I know from reading many English plays from the 16th and 17th centuries that calling someone a Puritan wasn't a compliment. No Christian wanted to be called "Anabaptist" either, says MacCullough, since it means rebaptizer and the radical reformers didn't even count infant baptism as genuine baptism. It was no more than a superstition in their eyes.

The term "Protestant" was born in 1529. At an imperial assembly held in Speyer, Germany, the pro-

Lutheran faction found itself in the minority and as an act of solidarity they issued a *protestatio* stating the beliefs they shared (like so-called "fundamentalists" did in the U.S. almost four centuries later). The label was at first used only in Germany, gaining broader circulation some decades later.

To avoid confusion, therefore, MacCullough uses the label "evangelical" instead of "Protestant" in his book. He says it "was widely used and recognized at the time, and it also encapsulates what was most important to this collection of activists – the good news of the Gospel, in Latinized Greek, the *evangelium*."

Small groups

The priesthood of all believers: realized, lost, revisited and being restored

Pieter Hendriks

In my original article called "Revitalizing the church by learning from the first Reformation – the New Covenant Reformation," which appeared in the *Christian Courier* of January 10, 2005, 6-8, I briefly discussed, among other things, the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers.

The Old Testament origin of this doctrine (Ex. 19:6) was explained and its failure to become a reality during the Old Testament and Old Covenant period (Jer. 31:31-32). Then we looked at how this biblical principle of the priesthood of all believers was finally realized through Christ's crucifixion and resurrection. I referred to this historic and world-significant work of Christ as the first, New-Covenant Reformation, thus beginning the New-Covenant period in church history.

Due to this radical Reformation of the Old Testament Church, the priesthood of all believers was finally realized, and the earliest manifestation of this priestly reality is described in Acts 2 after the Holy Spirit was poured out on Pentecost. Bible passages such as Acts 2:42-47 and Acts 4:32-37 describe a functional priesthood of believers. They also show a connection between the doctrine of the universal priesthood and the ministry of mutual care and of evangelism.

Besides this connection we notice, especially in Acts 2:42-47, that the actions of an active priesthood of believers coincide with a participation in small groups. It is not unreasonable to believe that those believers were greatly motivated and empowered in their ministry by their frequent meetings in those small groups. Church history and practical experiences of those who are part of an intentional small group life and ministry, as in cell groups, attest to a well-functioning universal priesthood. This was true during the time of the Early Christian Church and therefore can be true for many Christian churches today.

However, it seems that the priesthood of all believers is not so much alive as it should be. This seems especially true for long established and more traditional churches as they seem to lack much enthusiasm for the ministry of mutual care, evangelism and involvement in other spheres of life.

Questions that should be asked are, "How come the priesthood of all believers has lost so much of its original vitality? Why is it that churches today seem to have so much difficulty recognizing, acknowledging and longing for the same end result of the New-Covenant Reformation in terms of a priesthood that was so alive so early on in the history of the Christian church?" "How come so many local churches today seem to ignore the need of an optimal-functioning universal priesthood and have both the institutional and organic dimensions working together, firmly united and integrated as they did at the time the Spirit of God was so mightily poured out on Pentecost?" An

answer to these questions can be learned from the history of the Christian church. Let me explain.

The priesthood of all believers lost

Especially social-historic literature gives us reason to believe that during the first-century Church the concept of the universal priesthood was widely accepted and practiced, even when a growing division between clergy and laity became apparent. Already early on in the history of the Christian church there were appointed bishops next to presbyters (elders), deacons and the general laity. An ecclesiastical hierarchy developed with the bishop in permanent position and growing influence.

One of those bishops, Ignatius, was so convinced of the importance of the position of bishop that he acclaimed that "Where the bishop is, there is the Church; without him there can be nothing but conventicles which have no right to exist." Those conventicles were most likely house churches. Until the third century, services and meetings were often held in private houses, and the bishop had the authority to bring these house churches under one central control. Conventicles were apparently not responsible to the bishop and were not seen as part of the Church. However, it was recognized that they were immediately responsible to Christ.

It could well have been that bishops started to believe in the significance of their position as they felt responsible for bringing and keeping unity among believers, as heretics wanted to split the unity of the church. Not only that, bishops also threw themselves up as staunch defenders of the church against all sorts of verbal and non-verbal attacks, due to the growing hostility of the Roman government against the Christian church and faith.

During the second century, the separation between clergy and laity was clearly seen in the celebration of the Lord's Supper, when it became less and less a communal celebration. The reason that the laity came gradually to be less involved as participants in the celebration of the Lord's Supper was that leaders of the church changed their understanding of the purpose of this sacrament seeing it more and more as a sacrifice to be offered by them on behalf of the whole community. During that development the priesthood of all believers began to lose its significance.

In the meantime, the evening service with its common evening meal and the Lord's Supper was conjoined with the morning service with the reading of Scripture, preaching, singing and prayer. In the latter part of the second century, the Church dealt with an important, if not a serious ecclesiastical problem: should it become a church organized as an institute (organization) or as an organism. The former meant a hierarchical church with standard forms of worship,

sacred literature, pre-described forms of discipline and how to relate to the outside world. The latter meant a church in which men and women participated equally as the vehicles of the Spirit.

It was decided to work towards a hierarchical church in which women had no role to play, and the missionary zeal relegated to the background. The gap between clergy and laity continued to widen. Nevertheless, the Church experienced some conversion growth of less-privileged members of the Greco-Roman society. Ironically, this growth came through the work of lay people.

In the first part of the third century, two African bishops, Origen of Alexandria and his contemporary, Cyprian of Carthage, became the main players in the final separation of clergy and laity. It was at a later point in his life that Origen, in view of the statements made by the Council of Nicea, Canons 5 and 18, which looked at the Church as a clerical order only, preferred the Levitical order of priesthood together with that of Melchizedek. The reason for holding on to the Levitical priesthood was that he understood that what was said about Melchizedek in the letter to the Hebrews and in Psalm 110 applies only to Christ. That means that the Aaronic priesthood is continued in the ministry of the bishop and clergy.

Cyprian, an otherwise extraordinary example of one who carried Christ's standard in a threatening world, had also developed an Old Testament mindset in terms of the priesthood and church hierarchy. He concluded that Deuteronomy 17:12 clearly indicates that no one should disobey the Lord's command to 'hear the priest.' This conclusion was coupled to the New Testament passage Acts 23:4, in which Paul makes reference to the content of Exodus 22:28. While ignoring, overlooking or simply denying Paul's apology for not realizing that at that time Ananias was then high priest (verse 5), Cyprian understood Paul as suggesting that the Aaronic priesthood was still valid and thus should be practiced.

Upon Origin's and Cyprian's way of looking at the priesthood the fate of the laity and their priesthood was officially decided and regarded as not applicable. At the end of the third century the church leadership had evolved from a simple integrated leadership to a firmly established episcopate, supported by clergy, and possessing all authority.

In contrast, the laity had evolved from respected and fully participating believers in church life to a mere appendage to the church as institute that had rid itself of a vital component inherently belonging to the Church. Clergy and laity were expected to gather once a week in special large buildings for worship and communion. Small groups of believers, initially fully integrated as places where the priesthood was fully alive had evolved to the point of oblivion. The organic dimension of the church was amputated from its original body and so placed in

captivity. Though abandoned, the church as organism was not dead.

The priesthood of all believers revisited

It was going to take twelve centuries before a period of reformation movements, led by men such as John Tauler, Nicholas of Basle, John Wyclif and John Huss, drew attention to what was seen as a significantly misconstrued theology and ecclesiology of the institutional (Roman Catholic) Church. They talked about the loss of the believers' priesthood, and put in efforts to express the universal priesthood once again in the life of the church. While they did not receive the results they had hoped for they had drawn the attention of the clergy in the Roman Catholic Church.

It took a Martin Luther, knowingly influenced by Tauler and Wyclif, and who initiated the protestant Reformation, to make a real dent in the Church's theology and ecclesiology. The Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century included, among other things, attempts to restore the universal priesthood to all believers under the leadership of Reformers Luther, Zwingli and Calvin. However, neither of these three Reformers did succeed in restoring satisfactorily the universal priesthood.

Luther had forcefully addressed the issue of the priesthood of all believers in light of the separation between clergy and laity, as well as in light of the governance of the church. In practical terms, Luther finally sought a more meaningful participation of the laity at the Lord's Supper, as did Zwingli. Calvin saw a more meaningful priesthood in terms of getting laity involved in the governance of the church and in their presence and participation during communion. He also encouraged the laity's priesthood in the context of mutual care and fellowship.

Despite this vision of mutual care, the truth is that since the Protestant Reformation the main care providers became and remained ministers, elders and deacons for years to come. The success of the Protestant Reformation in restoring the universal priesthood was rather limited, even though the priesthood of the laity was officially recognized and had received public attention. It had brought about changes in church governance, full participation of laity in the celebration of the Lord's Supper, as well as in some instances mutual care and fellowship in churches that now belonged to the Protestant churches.

However, this limited success of the Protestant Reformation should be put in perspective. Knowledge of the general morality of people in those years helps us to prevent any unfortunate blame for the limited success of the Reformers. The following examples of attitudes and behavior of church-going people in Germany will give us a sense in what kind of social circumstances these Reformers may have worked as they already

Small groups

had died just before the period covered in the following illustrations of social behavior by common people.

In Braunschweig-Lunenburg (1568): They drink brandy all day long on Sundays and are unmoved by warnings and punishment.

In Magdeburg (1570): Godlessness, open scorn for God's Word and doctrine for the gospel and the sacraments, contempt for pastors, disobedience, gross incivility and defiance have so gained the upper hand over the common people in this district, not to mention fornication, adultery, and every sort of vice, especially blaspheming, fraud and deception and swinish drinking.

In the town of Hartha (1581): His parishioners are not angels, but sinful, frail, and in large part malicious men and women, who live and act against the Ten Commandments and the secular law, and who neither listen to reason nor heed warnings.

In Nassau-Wiesbaden (1594): No one considers it a sin to swear.... Everyone is lacking about going to church, both young and old. Many have not been seen by their pastor in a year or more.... Those who come to service are usually drunk. As soon as they sit down they lean their heads on their arms and sleep through the whole sermon, except that sometimes they fall off the benches, making a great clatter, or women drop their babies on the floor.... The moment the sermon ends, everyone runs out. No one stays for the hymn, prayer and blessing. They behave as if they were at a dance, not a divine service.

In Strassburg (1600): Disobedience, brashness, and corruption grow daily among our young people. Young boys travel abroad, or go to war, coming back brutalized, scarcely Christian, but nothing is done to counteract this trend.

In Hessau-Nassau (1604): No one wants to go to church...great negligence in Catechism. How punctual they are, on the other hand, in going to a dance! The whole town turns out for revels. They come early and stay late. And what a sacrilegious use of the holy name of God is to be heard there! Running out of church during communion and disturbing the sermon with loud talk were common practices as well.

In Geislingen (1605): They practiced the following vices: dreadful blasphemy, stuffing and besotting themselves with food and drink, gambling openly in taverns and beer houses...also an arrogant spirit as shown in their contempt for the sermon, catechism, and the Lord's Supper.

These impressions from different parts of German society covered a period of thirty-five years during which the Heidelberg Catechism was written and approved. It could well be, and probably was most likely, that these impressions were indicative of a general morality in other parts of Western Europe around the sixteenth century. Of course, these impressions do not say that all people

were involved in such explicit forms of immorality and disrespect for God and his Word, as well as for servants of the Lord.

The Reformers, most likely having faced similar situations, could probably not see how the priesthood of all believers could be a reality in such a socially harsh climate. It is more likely that a church man like Calvin could have thought that good Biblical teaching and church leadership were more important than encouraging members of the church to use their gifts and live as priests of Christ, and to carry out the many responsibilities as living members of the church.

From an ecclesiastical point of view, the Protestant Reformation had left Protestant churches as mere institutes, with some improvements in the position of the laity in terms of governance and limited contributions to church life. The church as organism had not regained its former position of being an integral part of the Church, as was the case in the Early Christian Church.

The period between the Protestant Reformation and the beginning of the Postmodern era in the mid-1960s has seen two significant but less known reformation movements.

In seventeenth-century Germany, Frankfurt's Chief Pastor Spener reacted to the formalism of Protestant orthodoxy. He began to lead a little group of like-minded people who were gathered in his own house for Bible reading, prayer, and discussion of the Sunday sermons to deepen their own spiritual lives, to promote mutual care, and being involved in evangelism.

In following years, similar small groups developed, commonly called *collegia pietatis*, or also *ecclesiolae in ecclesia*. A growing understanding was that the universal priesthood was intimately connected to the high priesthood of Christ. Spener's pietistic movement had also awakened a social conscience among believers that made them realize that their priesthood also meant that they needed to apply Christian principles in other spheres of life. By doing this they would encounter successfully the bastions of evil. As a result of this new awareness they began to provide vital Christian service in every sphere of life, including addressing problems of industry, the slave trade, illiteracy, prison reform, politics, etc. However, the impact of pietism on society was overtaken by the rationalism and the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century as years went by.

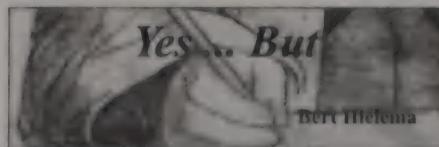
Meanwhile, England was affected by the reformation efforts of the Methodists, which brings us to the second important reformation movement spearheaded by John Wesley. Wesley was influenced by the simple lifestyle, sincere faith, and untiring service to others of the Moravians in Germany who, in turn, were deeply influenced



by evangelical preachers and reformers Wyclif and Huss, and pietist Spener with his emphasis on small groups. Wesley organized small groups, class meetings, as part of an (methodical) education system in which he instructed believers how to live a Christian life in an immoral and demoralized society. Wesley understood that small group gatherings are tools to help believers gain spiritual maturity, grow in discipleship, care for each other and reach out to unbelievers, using their creative, God-given abilities (spiritual gifts) and energies, impact society in meaningful ways, as well as having the opportunity to become leaders. Wesley's reformation efforts through small groups turned out to be an impressive transformation and civilization of the whole bottom level of England's population. Wesley's reformation efforts prove that the overall mission mandate of the Christian church needs to include the social/cultural mandate, which is also a prevalent view among those of Reformed persuasion.

Entering the Postmodern era, church government of both the Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant Church had not changed in any significant way since the Protestant Reformation, nor did the position of the laity. The Churches kept operating mainly as an institute, while small group meetings had died out over time. Some insight into why the universal priesthood had not further progressed in significant ways can be traced from extended and serious discussions among theologians, especially in the Protestant Church in e.g. the Netherlands and at a later point also in North America. Their discussions were about the relationship between the position and authority of officially elected and installed office bearers: ministers, elders and deacons and that of the general church members, the laity. Along these discussions developed discussions about the related issue of the priesthood of believers. It was Abraham Kuyper, a well-known theologian, founder of the Free University in Amsterdam in 1880, and Prime Minister of the Netherlands from 1901-1905, who initiated these discussions. He tried to find a balance in the power struggle between laity and clergy, whereby he showed his strong position took against the danger of popular sovereignty (the sovereignty of the laity), as well as of too much clerical power. During these discussions terms such as "office of believers," or the "general office" of laity over and against the "special offices" of ministers, elders and deacons did not help resolve matters of power and authority. In 1929, a plea was made for more active lay involvement in the life of the church. In 1945, the statement was made that the "special office" of clergy is actually "rooted in the universal office" of the laity. That led to the insight that the "government of the church is not from the top down but from the bottom up." During a conference in Canada, held in 1979, the Christian Reformed Church looked at the relationship between the "general office" and the "special offices," and agreed that the "general office" of believers is the essence of the Church. This means that ministers, elders and deacons are to serve, not to rule, the congregation. However, despite such declarations no real changes in the position of laity were introduced. Notable, the term priesthood of believers and its significance for the position of laity was apparently never looked at. Discussions on the priesthood of believers rather than on the office of believers could have offered helpful insights into how to solve satisfactorily the tense relationship between church leadership and common church members, as well as reaping the fruits of a vital, energetic and fully functional priesthood of believers. This is why we now consistently refer to the universal priesthood in our discussions.

Opinion



Yes ... But

Bert Hielema

The weather, ice, gas (methane), the weather, bears (polar), the weather, icebergs, gas (-oline), the weather

It is said that when two Englishmen meet, their first talk is of the weather. The Dutch are no different. I remember distinctly that one of the reasons I left the Netherlands was the weather. One of the Dutch poets described my old country as, "Oh land of mist and mist, of ugly and cold rain." I read somewhere that in North America discussing TV shows and sports has replaced the weather talk. No wonder: we have become masters over the weather. Climate Change is our doing.

Take the Arctic, the region where Frobisher nearly froze to death 400 years ago, or the Antarctic where Sir Robert Scott did find his grave in 1912. These ice-covered polar regions help to keep our climate cool and hold tremendous amounts of fresh water in their glaciers, ice caps, and ice sheets. The frozen liquids locked up in these vast reservoirs is the equivalent of nearly 60 meters - 220 feet - of sea level. Should it all melt, we'll have Noah's Flood all over again.

It's precisely there, in the last virgin lands of the world, where irreversible changes are taking place. Totally due to us. By not talking about the weather, perhaps we hide our shame. Ah, but look at the bright side, some say. The Great Melting may someday open up all sorts of advantages: an ice-free passage around the North Pole, reveal some real treasures: gold, diamonds, oil, gas.

Methane gas

But, says I, how about the methane gases there, suddenly released by the melting permafrost, 10 times more effective than man-made greenhouse gases, throwing warming into overdrive through constant positive feedback: more gases, more heat; more heat, more gases.

Two Canadians, Queen's University biologist John Smol and University of Alberta earth scientist Alexander Wolfe, recently led an international team studying our world's most northerly boundaries. They found dramatic new evidence of worsening conditions there, drastic distortions with all appearance of permanency.

Dr Smol: "We're crossing ecological thresholds here, as shown by changes in biota associated with climate-related phenomena like receding ice cover in lakes. Once you pass these thresholds it's hard to go back."

The study concludes that it may soon be impossible to find "pristine Arctic environments untouched by climate warming." And since temperature alterations in the Arctic are considered bellwethers of what is to come further south, the researchers consider this their most urgent environmental wake-up call to date.

Polar bears

They are not alone. The World Wildlife Federation (WWF) believes polar bears,

lacking the summer sea ice they normally hunt on, could be extinct within 20 years. They will be something that our grandchildren can only read about in books.

Also scientists from the Cambridge-based British Antarctic Survey have discovered that a massive Antarctic ice sheet previously assumed to be stable may be starting to disintegrate. Its collapse would raise sea levels around the earth by more than 5 meters - 16 feet - that's as high as a two storey house, putting enormous chunks of low-lying, desperately poor countries such as Bangladesh under water - not to mention much of southern England and the Netherlands, called the Low Lands because much of it is below sea level. Good bye The Hague, Amsterdam, Rotterdam, my home city of Groningen. London too and New York City.

Icebergs

Gone also all icebergs, including the "tip of the iceberg" metaphor. The 87th International Conference of Linguists (ICL), in a recent seventy-two nation summary report suggested that this phrasing might cease to exist before the end of the first half of the 21st century.

Already the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) has predicted that 2005 will be the warmest ever. Last year was the fourth warmest on record and brought us multiple massive hurricanes in Florida, a prolonged drought in the southwest, Europe's burning summers, Brazil's first South Atlantic hurricane ever, the storm of the century on Canada's east coast, and Japan's worst season of typhoons in memory. And that while global temperatures have risen less than 1 degree Celsius. If a 5 degree drop caused the Ice Age, imagine an 11 degree rise. Apparently not impossible.

In a new study published in the prestigious British scientific journal *Nature*, researchers from some of Britain's leading universities used computer modeling to predict that global warming might prove "twice as catastrophic as previously thought, turning Britain's interior into an unrecognizable tropical landscape. The earth, the study found, was "far more sensitive to increases in man-made greenhouse gases than previously realized."

The study's worst-case scenario, a rise in average global temperatures 11°C greater than today, according to Professor Bob Spicer, of the Open University, would be "unprecedented in the long geological record of the Earth." May be there is a Hell after all. Man-made.

Movie anger

There also could be a slice of heaven somewhere. If only the people were all saints, including me, of course.

During the Spring break I visited America.

One of our daughters lives in a perfect spot in greater Los Angeles and, with summer weather there most anytime, our stay was a real pleasure. We took a grandson along, who had never flown before. Crossing the mountains west of Las Vegas presented quite a bumpy ride. I kept reminding myself that I had never heard of a plane disintegrating in the air because of turbulence. When we landed quite a few people clapped. A certain sign of tension relief.

Enjoyed the ocean beach in Santa Monica; marveled at the Huntington Library and Gardens in Pasadena. Saw a Gutenberg Bible there and an original copy of Chaucer's Canterbury tales.

Everything perfect? No. Since we were at the centre of the world's entertainment industry, my wife and I decided to see a movie in Century City, close to our hotel in Beverly Hills. I once read that films portray the spirit of the times more accurately than any other media. I hope this isn't true, because if so, God help America. I had seen a prominent display in a paper, showing 2 Big Thumbs up for "The Upside of Anger," so, for once, trusting an ad, we went in and committed \$16.00 to the bulging coffers of Hollywood.

Before the main feature appeared we were force-fed six or seven previews of coming "attractions," all so gross and boring and stupid and disgusting that, before I got to the *Upside of Anger*, anger got me down. I kept on thinking: if these introductions accomplish to persuade people to see these pictures, then either I am totally out of touch or everybody else is. This frame of mind did not set the stage for a friendly reception for "The Upside of Anger." So, after 10 minutes of more nihilistic nonsense, we walked out, giving the movie not two big thumbs up but one finger pointing in a certain direction.

Away from my usual routine, I watched a bit of TV. Mostly local stuff: an operator in a helicopter filming a guard injured at a crosswalk, a bus blocking a highway, lots of traffic jams. OK I could live with that. What really got my goat were court scenes: two men, one who had and one who had not murdered his wife. Characters I had never heard of, but were apparently famous for something. For what, I don't know. I guess I am culturally deprived, or better, sociologically challenged. And then, of course, that creepy creature that's supposed to be a human being: Michael Jackson. How anybody can root for that fellow is beyond me.

Gasoline

Oh yes, gas was big news. I mean the fuel that powers America. Apparently it has gone up in price. The real big news is that it's over \$2.00 (US) per gallon, which translates into 3.78 litres, which gives it a litre price of 53 cents US or 63 cents Canadian. Big news.

Compare this to Ontario where it is \$0.86. Or Europe where in the Netherlands it costs \$2.05 (Can) and a bit lower in Germany: \$1.85 (Can).

Gasoline also made news way up in Alaska. Some politicians want the oil now buried in its Wild Life Reserve. At stake is either to leave the habitat of millions of caribou untouched, or drill and pipe out its crude and so extend the wild ride of unchecked gasoline use by an extra six months. Yet a simple tax of a single dollar per gallon - which would bring it within the range of Canada - would do miracles: would eliminate the need to endanger that wild life refuge, would increase sorely needed U.S. tax revenue, now deep, deep in the red, would keep some Hummers and SUV's off the road, would cause less air pollution.

There are a lot of good things there too. Ah, the weather! In the twenties Celsius, or seventies Fahrenheit. I ran in shorts among the luxurious multi-million dollar houses. Mind you, it doesn't take much to become a million dollar dwelling here. Where our daughter lives, any good size three bedroom bungalow is worth close to a million bucks. Right now anyway. Give it a year or two and values will drop like a stone. It's already happening.

While running a couple of times, I scouted things out in that rich enclave and concluded that Beverly Hills has a few unwritten rules: (1) Only buy German luxury cars. (2) No grass blade may be longer than 2 inches and must have no weeds and be perfectly green. Walking in a shopping complex in Beverly Hills I noticed another generally accepted custom: No women to be flat-chested; show off what you have, natural or enhanced. And in that balmy climate this is possible year-round. Part of the scenery.

Still glad to be back. Give me Paul Martin anytime. He may be Mr. Dithers, but still our country works, with universal health care, well-funded old age provisions. That reminds me of that Social Security scam that's going on there. Even though that system is perfectly solvent until 2018, the Bushites want to give the stock market a boost by having people provide for their own old age pension by investing into the stock market, which has been tanking lately and will for a long time. Judging by the movies they watch, the politicians they elect and the debts they have, I am afraid many there can be sold any bill of goods.

Previous columns and other writings can be seen on hielema.ca, including a new essay on "The Covenant."

Bert Hielema
bert@hielema.ca



News/Business Directory

Hong Kong academics see some good in China's new religion rules



Hong Kong (ENI) - New regulations promulgated by the Chinese government continue existing controls on religion but also include a number of positive aspects, say some observers of religion in Hong Kong.

The regulations which came into force on March 1 deal with religious organizations, venues for religious activities, religious personnel, religious properties and legal responsibilities.

"It is the first administrative legislation at the national level," Dr Ying Fuk Tsang, a lecturer at the Divinity School at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, told Ecumenical News International. "There have already been a number of religious regulations at the provincial or municipal level. The document is a summary of the legislative efforts of the Chinese government in the last 10 to

20 years."

Ying noted that the document limits the power of government officials, such as stating that the person who "abuses authority, neglects their duties, practices favoritism, fraud" should face punishment, and it was a positive side of the new regulation.

Still, the document reiterated the need for religious bodies to be registered and, Dr Ying pointed out, a large number of Protestants are grouped as "house churches" and did not register.

The regulations do not, however, apply to Hong Kong under the policy of "One Country, Two Systems" brokered for Hong Kong's first 50 years after the departure of the British in 1997 to allow the new special administrative region of China to have its own system, different to communism.

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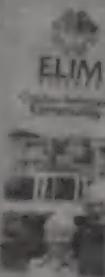
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Anthony Lam, senior researcher of the Catholic Holy Spirit Study Centre, said he was "cautiously optimistic" about the regulations.

They still "contain pre-existing articles that hinder religious freedom, but the articles, which are of benefit to religious freedom, are all new and previously not envisioned," he noted in an article in the

March edition of the Tripod magazine, published by the centre.

"We may say that the harmful regulations have not been increased," he wrote, "while the beneficial articles have taken one small step forward," concluding that, as a whole, the regulations "are beneficial to religious freedom."

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Classifieds

Birth	Anniversaries			Obituaries
 <p>Caleb John Bosveld I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made.... Psalm 139:14</p> <p>Ed & Joanne were blessed with the birth of Caleb on February 17, 2005. He arrived safely at Public General Hospital in Chatham at 9:50 a.m. and weighed in at 7 pounds, 9.5 ounces.</p> <p>A tiny brother for Joshua (10) and Kristen (9).</p> <p>Proud grandparents are Martin & Lynn Bosveld of Chatham and Albert & Gertrude Bouwers of Metcalfe.</p> <p>Caleb lives at: 84 Sherwood Court Chatham ON N7M 6L2 519-358-7325 ebsveld@sympatico.ca</p>	<p>Apeldoorn 1955 April 6 2005 Moorefield Ontario</p> <p>We are praising and thanking the Lord for his faithfulness. We hope to celebrate D.V the 50th Wedding Anniversary of our parents and grandparents</p> <p>GEORGE AND ELEANOR MUNNIK</p> <p>We pray that the Lord will continue to bless them with many more enjoyable years together.</p> <p>Congratulations with love from all of us.</p> <p>Irma & John Devries Sarah & Wayne Sutherland, Joyce, Brian, Teresa Freda & Len Schellingerhoudt Bradley, David, Christopher, Amanda Eric & Cecilia Munnik Roland & Holly Munnik Brandon, Kayla, Catrina, Michael</p> <p>Open House from 2:00 - 4:00 p.m. on Saturday, April 9, 2005 at the Missionary Church, 550 Prospect St. Palmerston</p> <p>Home address: RR#2 Moorefield ON N0G 2K0</p>	<p>1950 April 5 2005 Koudekerk a/d Rijn Tavistock, Ontario</p> <p>NICOLAAS AND NEELTJE REYNEVELD (de Jong)</p> <p>We give thanks to God for the many blessings he has given to our parents in their 55 years of marriage.</p> <p>With love from your children:</p> <p>Klaas & Nelly Reyneveld, Paisley, ON Neeltje & Pete VanDriel, Goderich, ON Karel & Patty Reyneveld, Woodstock, ON Dirk & Anne Reyneveld, Tavistock, ON Nellie & Guy St. Germain, Fredericton, N. Br. Nico Reyneveld, Tavistock, ON Jan & Patti Reyneveld, Curries, ON Corrie & Gord VandeBurg, Turlock, CA Trudy & Pete Bos, Cambridge, ON 27 grandchildren and 4 great-grandchildren.</p> <p>Home address: RR 2 Tavistock ON N0B 2R0</p>	<p>Surhuizem, Friesland February 9, 1928</p> <p>SUSAN (SIEUWKE) WESTENDORP (nee Singor)</p> <p>passed away peacefully, at the age of 77, after a courageous struggle with ill health.</p> <p>Susan was predeceased by her husband Donald in 1993. She is survived by her children:</p> <p>Ray & Lynn Westendorp, Camlachie Harry & Barb Westendorp, Camlachie Wenda Westendorp, Calgary, Alberta Andrea Gillespie, Durham, North Carolina Diane Sparling, Wyoming Mary Anne & Lew Richie, Sarnia John & Gayle Westendorp, Camlachie Bruce & Cindy Westendorp, Wyoming Sandra & Kim Nickels, Sarnia Bonnie & Henry Fohkens, Strathroy Donald Westendorp, Mt. Brydges</p> <p>Also survived by 13 grandchildren and 2 great-grandchildren, brothers Herman Singor and Frank Singor of Chatham, in-laws, nieces and nephews, as well as many relatives in the Netherlands.</p> <p>Predeceased by her sister, Margaret Westendorp (October 2004) and brother, Ben Singor (February 2005).</p> <p>The funeral service was held on Thursday, March 3, 2005, at the Wyoming Christian Reformed Church with Pastor Ralph Wigboldus officiating.</p> <p><i>The Lord is my light and my salvation - whom shall I fear?</i> <i>The Lord is the stronghold of my life - of whom shall I be afraid?</i> Psalm 27:1</p>	<p>Wyoming, Ontario February 27, 2005</p>
<p>Birthday</p> <p>We give thanks to God for allowing us to celebrate the 90th Birthday of</p> <p>Ann Bylsma (nee Schoult) on March 23, 2005</p> <p>Mother, your love for God and your cheerful attitude, also during times of adversity, have been and continue to be a wonderful example to us, your children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and great-great-grandchildren.</p> <p>Address: Grace Manor, 3rd Floor South Holland Christian Homes 7900 McLaughlin Road S Brampton ON L6Y 5A7</p>	 <p>Walking in the Light 1 John 1:7</p> <p>Heerde, the Neth. 1955 April 23 Jordan, Ont. 2005</p> <p>JAN DIRK PEREBOOM AND MARIA ELISABETH van APELDOORN</p> <p>will celebrate their 50th Wedding Anniversary on Saturday, April 23, 2005 with their children and grandchildren.</p> <p>Liz Pereboom & Henry Klumpenhouwer Mia & Lorne, and Tys Derk Pereboom & Nancy Brooks Eleanor and Marilyn J. Pieter Pereboom & Margaret Dijkhuis Jonathan Bert & Valerie Pereboom Dirk and Willem Maarten Pereboom & Ruth Baker Max and Ben Jodie Pereboom Bomhof & Tom Bomhof Elisabeth, Anna and Lucas</p> <p>Friends and well wishers are invited to join us for an Open House Celebration 2 p.m. - 4 p.m. Saturday, April 23, 2005</p> <p>Trinity Christian Reformed Church 1230 Old Martindale Rd St Catharines, ON</p> <p>Correspondence: 3886 Nineteenth St Jordan ON L0R 1S0</p>	<p>We express our deep sorrow in the sudden passing on into God's glory of our dear friend and executive director of our organization</p> <p>FRED VANDERVELDE</p> <p>His tireless and enthusiastic work for thirty years for the advancement of God's Kingdom by raising funds for the development of Christian textbooks will be forever etched in our memory of Fred. These textbooks are used in nearly all Christian schools continent wide.</p> <p>We trust the Lord will comfort Audrey and her family in this time of sorrow.</p> <p>On behalf of present and previous Directors of the Canadian Christian Education Foundation Menno Eelkema - President</p>	<p>Peacefully at Faith Manor, Holland Christian Homes, Brampton on Thursday, March 3, 2005.</p> <p>EDO KNIBBE</p> <p>formerly of Holland Marsh at 80 years of age. Beloved husband of Margaret.</p> <p>Dear father of: Rita (Gary) Aalbers, of Strathroy Norman (Joanne) of Bradford Harry (Alda) of Edmonton Darlene (Graham) Barracough of New Dundee Marvin (Anita) of Bradford and predeceased by infant daughter Diana. Dear Grandpa of 19 grandchildren.</p> <p>Friends called at Skwarchuk Funeral Home, 30 Simcoe Rd, Bradford for visitation. Funeral service was held at Springdale Christian Reformed Church, on Tuesday, March 8, 2005 at 1 p.m. Interment Kettleby Cemetery.</p>	<p>Correspondence: Margaret Knibbe 7900 McLaughlin Rd S CT 505 Brampton ON L6Y 5A7</p>
<p>Personals</p> <p>Christian woman (divorced), early 50s - living in Ontario - would like to correspond with sincere, non-smoking, Christian gentleman. Prayerfully awaiting your response at lamhis316@hotmail.com</p>	<p>1950-2005</p> <p>Great is God's Faithfulness</p> <p>HENK AND JANE VAN GIJSEN</p> <p>along with their children and grandchildren, invite you to join them in celebrating their 55th Wedding Anniversary</p> <p>at an Open House with Family and friends Saturday, April 23, 2005 2 - 4:30 p.m.</p> <p>Free Reformed Church Gregory Drive East Chatham, Ontario</p> <p>Home Address: 10 Wilhelmina Way Chatham ON N7M 6M3</p>	 <p>Holland Calling : CFRC 101.9 FM Kingston Ont. 9.00 am Saturday mornings CJLX 92.3 FM Belleville Ont. 7.30 pm Sunday nights</p>		
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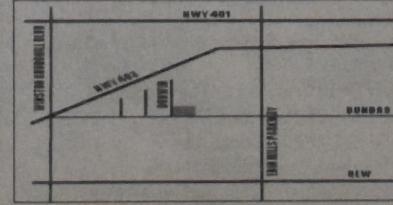
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Classified Rates

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION

Christian Courier is published on alternate Mondays. Copy deadline for each issue is 9 a.m. Tuesday, 13 days prior to publication date.

RATES

(GST added to all rates listed)
All personal and family announcements: \$16.00 per column inch (P.I.) (2" wide)

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Christian Courier reserves the right to print classifieds using our usual format and editing style. Please provide us with clear copy. *Christian Courier* is not responsible for any errors due to hand written or phoned-in advertisements.

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Events/Advertising

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

April 8 Beginnings Counselling & Adoption Services of Ontario holds its 20th Anniversary Celebration Dinner. Hamilton District Chr. High School, 6:00 p.m. punch, 6:45 p.m. dinner, free will offering. Call 905-528-6665 by April 1st to make your reservation. See www.beginnings.ca for details.

April 8 The Woodstock Dutch Theatre Group presents "DE RUIGE RITSELAARS", Een Klucht in 4 bedrijven door Hub Foher, at the Christian Heritage School, **Jordan** at 8 p.m. See ad for ticket information.

April 9 Concert of Sacred Music by St. Thomas Crescendo Male Choir 7:30 p.m. **Bethel CRC**, 716 Classic Drive, London (Freewill offering) Info: (519) 637-4357

April 9 Ambassadors Christian Male Chorus, **Ancaster CRC**. For more information call 905-389-2104 or 905-689-5266 or 905-714-0126. Visit us at www.ambassadorschoir.ca

April 9 People's Memorial United Church, **Ridgeway**, Presents Eduard Klassen Paraguayan Folk Harpist in concert 7pm. Tickets are available by calling the church 905 894 3500 \$10.00 incl. refreshments.

April 15 Ambassadors Christian Male Chorus, Zion United Reformed Church 1238 Old Hwy 8, **Sheffield**. For information, call 905-389-2104 or 905-689-5266 or 905-714-0126. Visit us at www.ambassadorschoir.ca

April 22 Ambassadors Christian Male Chorus, Covenant CRC, **St. Catharines**. See ad.

April 23 Ambassadors Christian Male Chorus, Ebenezer CRC, **Jarvis**. See ad.

May 1 Concert of Sacred Music by St. Thomas Crescendo Male Choir 7:30 p.m. **Knox Presbyterian Church**, 55 Hincks Street, **St. Thomas** (Freewill offering) Info: (519) 637-4357

May 7 Liberation Choir 60th Anniversary Concert, with the Guelph Symphony Orchestra, 7:30 at **Hamilton Place**. Tickets: \$20, \$30, \$40. Available from choir members/ box office/ www.organs.ca

May 11 CLASSIS HURON will meet D.V. in regular session on **May 11, 2005** in the New Life CRC of **Guelph On.**, at 9:30 am. See ad below.

June 24-26 Christian Reformed Church of **Kentville, Nova Scotia** will be celebrating its 50th Anniversary. For more details contact Gerrit Tenyenhus, ph.1-902-678-7641 or gtenyenhus@nssympatico.ca or the church at 1-902-678-6293 or fax 1-902-679-5230. Email: kentvillecrc@ns.sympatico.ca

July 1-3 Nobleford CRC 100 year anniversary celebrations with picnic, banquet and services. For more information contact Bert/Pat Konynenbelt at (403)824-3442 or by e-mail at bpkbelt@telus.net

July 8-10 Charlottetown Christian Ref. Church will be celebrating 50 years of ministry. For more information, contact the church office at **902-894-4721** or email: chtowncrc@pei.aibn.com.

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CLASSIS HURON
will meet D.V. in regular session on **May 11, 2005** in the New Life CRC of **Guelph On.**, at 9:30 am. All materials for the printed Agenda must be in the hands of the Stated Clerk of Classis no later than April 6, 2005. Stated clerk:
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News

British prime minister shuns religious role in politics, but praises church in society**Michael Ireland**

LONDON, ENGLAND (ANS) — Addressing an audience of religious leaders in the United Kingdom, British Prime Minister Tony Blair said that religion should not play the same role in British politics that it does in America.

According to the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Blair said he did not want a system where politicians went out "beating their chests about our faith."

The BBC said Blair was speaking to church leaders, other faith representatives and community activists in London about his vision for the role of faith in the UK, addressing the same Christian group already spoken to by the Conservative and Liberal Democrat leaders.

The lecture was organized by the Faith Works Movement, which hopes faith will be a hotly contested issue in the forthcoming election.

In the question-and-answer session after his speech, Blair was asked about reports that Alastair Campbell, a close ally of the Prime Minister who was his communications chief, had once told an interviewer who asked about Mr Blair's faith: "I'm sorry, we don't do God."

Blair said faith was very important on a personal level but could quickly become misinterpreted.

"I don't want to end up with an American-style type of politics with us all going out there and beating our chests about our faith," he said.

People are defined by their faith but it is, he suggested, "a bit unhealthy" if it became used in the political process.

Tuesday's lecture comes after both the Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury

and the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Westminster suggested abortion should be an election issue.

In his speech, Blair said a vision of community, with people helping each other, was central to his politics. He said

churches made a "visible, tangible difference" for the better in society.

"I would like to see you play a bigger, not a lesser, role in the future," he said.

"So many of your organizations have the capacity not only to help, but to inspire and to enthuse, by being unashamed about your beliefs, your commitment and your example."

Addressing a cross section of the church at the Faith Works lecture Tony Blair told his audience "You should be more confident of proclaiming what you do."

He was referring to the immense amount of community work, particularly with the young, which the church is involved in at a local level. The Prime Minister went on to pay tribute to the church's work in social action.

Blair said he wanted to "recast" the 1945 welfare state for the modern age, but that governments could only do things in partnership with others, including faith groups who were helping the "millions" of young people who failed to fulfill their potential.

He also praised churches for being at the forefront of attempts to fight world

poverty and injustice.

London-based Premier Christian Radio's Peter Kerridge welcomed the Prime Minister's assertion that churches should be more vocal about the difference they make to their local community.

Kerridge, the Chief Executive of one of the UK's leading Christian Media groups, said after the event: "The Prime Minister is encouraging Christians to become more vocal about the positive action with which they are involved rather than only being known for speaking out against those things which they find offensive."

Kerridge continued: "Premier reflects the views of Christians across the range of the church and understands the contentious issues which evoke deep feeling in the Christian community, but now we will use our voice to reach the public about the important community work Christians in the UK are taking part in. Today must act as a catalyst for that to begin to change — the church must learn to promote itself positively."

Michael Ireland is Chief Correspondent with ASSIST News Service



Bush and Blair in conversation

NATO PHOTO

News briefs**Canadian church attendance up**

Three different polls conducted in Canada over the last 4 years indicate that weekly church attendance is on the rise — from 20 percent a few years ago to 25 percent. As much as 37 percent of Canadians go to church once a month.

The church is growing fastest among Chinese immigrants.

US Catholics skipping mass

Catholics in the US are becoming less faithful in attending mass with each generation. In 1987, 44 percent of Catholics attended mass once a week. By 1999 this had dropped to 37 percent. The polls do not support the contention that recent scandals have triggered an exodus from the church.

Mass arrest of German pastors remembered

In mid-March Germany commemorated the arrest of 500 pastors of the so-called Confessing Church who read an anti-Nazi declaration from their pulpits 70 years ago. On March 17, 1935, over 500 pastors warned their members against the "mortal dangers" of the "new religion" idolizing blood, race, nationality, honor and freedom. Most of the pastors were released several days later.

Clergy collaborators outed

In Hungary and Slovakia, Roman Catholic bishops issued a public apology for those clergy who acted as communist agents after the names of some clergymen appeared on list of collaborators published recently. The church asked for forgiveness from those harmed by such acts of collaboration.

In Hungary the bishops also questioned the source and accuracy of the list. In the former Czechoslovakia about one of every 10 priests are believed to have collaborated to some extent with the communist authorities.

Conservatives admit women to church offices

The Netherlands Reformed Churches (Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken), one of the smaller, more conservative of the Reformed denominations created by a split in 1969, has decided to open the office of elder to women and eventually also the office of pastor. The denomination consists of 92 churches that broke with the Liberated (Vrijgemaakte) Churches, which broke with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Gereformeerde) in 1944. The latter expressed disappointment that the RCN had made the decision without consultation, for they still hoped for a reconciliation.

Supreme Court of India on untouchables

The Supreme Court of India is considering the place of Christian and Muslim Dalits (untouchables) in Indian society. Those belonging to the Dalit class have long been confined to menial jobs in India, not even being allowed inside Hindu temples. Legislation has been passed to address discrimination against Hindu, Sikh and Buddhist Dalits, but Christian and Muslim Dalits were not included in this legislation guaranteeing them access to certain kinds of employment and other benefits.

Eating together food for the teen-age soul

For several years, Suniya Luthar, a psychologist at Columbia University, tracked teenagers from the affluent suburbs of New York City, comparing their lives with those of a group of inner-city young people. The median household income in the group is over \$130,000 (U.S.) a year.

The girls in the group are three times more likely to suffer from clinical depression than the national average. And alcohol and drug use is considerably

higher among them than among the less advantaged group.

Analysis of the data suggests that high parental expectations combined with parental neglect are important factors.

The kids most likely to become depressed and anxious and to use drugs are the ones with parents who expect the most of them. Also, teens who are left alone at home for several hours a week are more likely to develop bad attitudes

and behavior problems. Prof. Luthar found, "Eating dinner with at least one parent on most nights" made for much better adjusted adolescents with far fewer problems.

The story received wide coverage in the media because it came from a secular psychologist. When James Dobson, or some other evangelical leader says the same thing, the media just snicker.

activities, and set limits."

Another study showed that among unsupervised kids, boys develop poorer work habits than girls. "The boys may need to be on a shorter leash," said one of the psychologists conducting the study. Among supervised kids, there was no gender difference. [USA Today]

Mom, just keep asking those obnoxious questions

There's reassuring news for working mothers. Many are concerned that their work lives could hurt their school-age kids. A recent study suggests that teenagers aren't more likely to dabble in drugs and sex just because their moms work long hours, and preteens left "home alone" often aren't the worse for it. The

determining factor was whether a parent simply kept track of their children's behavior, asking them what they are doing.

The study leader Elizabeth Ozer of the University of California Medical School said: "The take-home message is ... parents should keep asking about